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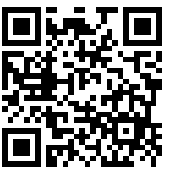

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# NO OUTSPAN

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*by the same author*

★

COMMANDO

TREKKING ON

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DENEYS REITZ

# NO OUTSPAN

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# FOREWORD

During the Boer War of forty years ago the writer of this book joined the republican army at the age of seventeen as a private guerrilla soldier and he remained under arms throughout that struggle. For much of that time he served under me and he and I had many exciting adventures and narrow escapes.

At the conclusion of hostilities he went into self-imposed exile to Madagascar rather than submit to British rule. There he endured great hardships and ultimately a letter from my wife found him to say that if South Africa, even under the Union Jack, was good enough for her husband, it was good enough for him.

The shot went home. Young Reitz made his way back to the Transvaal.

He was so racked with fever that my wife and I kept him for three years until at last he was restored to health and able to strike out for himself.

In the years that followed he came to see that for South Africa the only solution was co-operation between the English and Dutch sections of the community and he believed that this could only be effected inside the British Commonwealth.

Therefore when the last great war broke out in 1914 he threw himself wholeheartedly into the conflict.

He served under me once more in the campaigns in West Africa and East Africa after which he went to France where he ended up in command of a famous Scotch Battalion.

He was severely wounded but he returned to lead his battalion to the Rhine after the Armistice in 1918.

Of all these events Deneys Reitz has given a vivid account in two previous volumes. Now he has rounded off his further experiences in this book which is the story of his share, and to some extent my own share, in the public life of this country during the past twenty-five years.



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It covers a period in which he and I were closely associated in a long-drawn struggle against political forces which we considered it our duty to oppose.

But of set purpose he passes lightly over these troubles and he has given us instead an entertaining narrative of his activities by sea and land and air in the course of which he has succeeded in proving, as he puts it, that in spite of our quarrels, South Africa is a country of good temper and good will, with the hope of a united nation to come.

J. C. SMUTS

*Pretoria, South Africa.*
*December* 1942



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*at the end of the book*

THE EASTERN TRANSVAAL, SWAZILAND, ZULULAND, ETC.
CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



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# I

# AFTER THE ARMISTICE

## I

On the morning of 11th November 1918 British troops went into action in France near le Quesnoy and the Mormal forest. It was a stirring scene. Infantry marched to the attack; guns roared; rifles and machine-guns crackled; and the stage was set for another of those bloody battles that had been so frequent during the past months.

But there had been rumours of peace in the air of late and it was said that German envoys had crossed into the French lines with proposals for an armistice; so each man knew that he might be taking part in the final stroke of this particular Armageddon.

And as we were coming under fire from a village ahead, after several hours of orders and counter orders, we heard from afar the sound of cheering borne upon the breeze. It gathered volume as it came towards us; then we saw our Brigade Major riding through the press. The news he carried was obviously good for the shouts grew deafening as he made his way, and when at last he was near enough, he leaned from his saddle and handed me a dramatic message.

It was a hastily-pencilled note from Headquarters, and it said that as from 11 a.m. hostilities would cease. Battalions were to stand firm on the ground held at that hour and there was to be no fraternizing with the enemy. (I have since framed this document and it now hangs at our regimental mess in Ayr.)

Something like a hush fell upon the entire front as we realized that the Great War was over at last. Other battalion commanders received similar instructions and precisely at eleven the advance slowed down and then came to a halt. It was a supreme moment and, feeling an urge to communicate the splendid thoughts that raced through my brain, I swung my men into a hollow square, intending to address them on the mighty significance of the day. But as I sat my horse facing them, I was seized with stage fright, and after stumbling through some halting phrases I gave it up.



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If the ceremony was a failure, at any rate the fighting was over, the guns were stilled, and we had survived the war, an eventuality many of us had long ceased to believe in, so great had been the butchery.

On every hand we could now see troops pitching camp or marching to the deserted villages dotted around, in search of billets, and from what we could make out, the German soldiers across the way were doing the same. We made for a little French hamlet named Romeries where the *curé*, to my embarrassment, rushed out as I alighted and gave me a resounding kiss on both cheeks, while the men tittered at my discomfiture.

That night we celebrated the end of the war with a rum issue to all ranks. Afterwards, as I lay in my sleeping bag pondering the future, I made up my mind to return to South Africa at once. I did not anticipate any difficulty, because in former campaigns as soon as the business was ended we had proceeded home without further ado, each man going off on horseback, train, or ship, as suited his convenience; and I thought it would be the same now.

I discovered my mistake the very next morning, for instead of packing my kit, I received orders to lead my battalion into Germany as part of the Army of Occupation that was to hold the bridgeheads of the Rhine pending a settlement of the peace terms. In the upshot it took me eight months to get demobilized. For the moment, however, I was not unduly damped as the prospect of seeing fresh countries at the head of my regiment was pleasant enough.

In about a week we were ready. The Army of Victory, as it was called, 60,000 strong, was assembled, and we started away in parallel columns on a wide front, banners waving, bands playing, and the troops in high fettle. After some days we entered the liberated zone beyond Maubeuge where the French inhabitants had lived under German military rule for several years. We were greeted with frenzied delight. The people crowded around us with shouts of '*Vivent les Alliés; vivent les Ecossais*' and the women and girls embraced the soldiers, who received these demonstrations with sheepish grins. Riding in advance, I might have come in for a lion's share, but fortunately we had a kilted pipe band in the van, and the drum major with his embroidered facings, his Scotch tunic and the magnificent swing of his baton, was taken to be the commanding officer and drew most of the fire.



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The population had fared harshly under martial law; they looked pinched and starved, and their joy at being freed from bondage was a touching thing to see.

Leaving France behind us, we entered Belgian territory where much the same conditions prevailed. We went by Thuin and the river Sambre, through the Ardennes, then across the Meuse by Spontin, Dinant and Salm Chateau, and we listened to many a sad tale of the indiscriminate shooting of civilians during the first weeks of the war. At the village of Bého we passed across the frontier into Germany. Our Divisional Commander, General Deveril, took the salute as we marched by and from now onward we travelled in sullen hostile country. Nonetheless, to lead a fine regiment through invaded territory with the pipes askirl and the colours floating in the sunshine was not without its thrill; and to sit one's horse looking down upon the populace came as near to 'riding in triumph through Persepolis' as is given to the average mortal.

At length, in a fortnight or so, we reached the outskirts of Cologne and we went into winter-quarters, with all the world blanketed in snow (a sight which never fails to surprise a South African, even after long experience of it.)

I was billeted on a local magnate named Haase at Merzenich. He and his wife treated me well and the townsfolk called me 'Herr Kommandant' and doffed their hats when I rode by. I frequently went into Cologne to see the Cathedral and other places of interest and I visited the British outposts and wired strong-points on the far bank of the Rhine.

Thus December passed, and we celebrated Hogmanay Nicht in the riotous fashion of the Scots Fusiliers. Next morning I remained in bed with a fevered brow, praying to be left in peace. Towards midday however I heard our pipe band beneath my window and looking out, saw my second-in-command, Major Shaw, gingerly dismounting from his horse; soon he was climbing the stairs and knocking at my door. If possible, he looked worse than I did and to my horror he informed me that custom ordained us to be piped round the four units to toast a New Year bumper with each of them. I groaned, Shaw said he felt like hell too, but we could not fail the Battalion on a point of national honour such as this; so I dressed and got on my horse and we rode the round and drank four stiff rum toddies in succession, the eyes of the men fastened upon us.



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Shaw and I carried grimly through and I believe we emerged creditably enough from a frightful ordeal. I went teetotal after that for two years.

As the weeks passed, I tired of the bleak winter conditions and the monotony of garrison life; and our Brigadier, General Fisher, a man of understanding, granted me furlough on the basis that when I reached London I was to apply for my discharge. So on a given day I took my leave of the 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers. With them I had witnessed great events. In their company I had lived in the trenches and withstood the German spring offensive of March 1918 in which I was severely wounded. After long months in hospital I had returned to the Battalion in time to see the Hindenburg Line, the strongest military system in history, battered down by British troops, and thereafter I had commanded the Fusiliers in the concluding battles of the war.

I had lost many friends and now I was bidding farewell to those who remained and, looking back across the years, I remember with pride my service with this fine Scottish regiment.

I travelled by rail via Charleroi, Liége and Boulogne and thence by leave-boat to England. I arrived in London at night to find all the streets ablaze. I had been there only in wartime when everything was in darkness after sunset, so it took me some time to readjust myself to peace conditions. I called at the War Office the very next morning, thinking in my innocence that I would be given my papers, after which I proposed catching an outgoing mail steamer to Capetown. A preliminary brush with the clerical staff inside disabused me as to this and I began to realize that it was much easier to get into the British army than to get out of it.

On my first arrival in England, long ago, I had presented myself at a recruiting office, signed some papers, and was enlisted at once as a private. Now I found that there were many thousands of applicants before me and that I was to await my time. I was told that it would probably be a question of months, for the government could not loose millions of men upon the country as the process of reabsorbing them into civil life must necessarily be a gradual one. This was reasonable enough but it made my vision of an early return to South Africa fade into the distance. I decided to make the best of a bad job, so I roamed the streets of London, visiting museums and theatres and art galleries and dropping in at the War Office every other day to see how I stood.



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One morning when I was queuing up at Whitehall on the off-chance of having word of my affairs, a band of angry A.S.C. men rushed through the archway into the quadrangle, shouting protests at demobilization delays. To me their outburst savoured of mutiny, but a young guardee subaltern of nineteen or so with three wound stripes on his arm came out and faced them. He ordered them to fall-in; to stand to attention and to tell-off by numbers, and so ingrained had become their sense of discipline through years of war that they instinctively obeyed him. He told them what he thought of their conduct, right-about-turned them, and they went away without a murmur. Then with a bored expression on his face he disappeared inside.

During these weeks I went to Hyde Park to a memorial service for the dead. It was a dignified ceremony 'with pomp and rolling music like a king'. There was a tall mound of wreaths, each bearing a message. Some were:

In memory of my dearest sweetheart killed in France 10 November 1918.

In memory of my dear son, torpedoed on the *Aragon*.

To the memory of Private J—— G—— killed in action 1917. I loved you in life, I love you still. Your dearest friend J—— M——

Torpedoed on the *Hawke*.

Killed in East Africa.

Killed in Palestine.

Killed in Salonika.

Killed in Suvla.

To the honoured memory of my five sons killed in France. The flowers of the forest are a' wede awa'.

On 6 March 1919 I motored out to beyond Winchester with General Dawson of the South African Brigade and we saw at a distance the rioting of the Canadian troops owing to more demobilization grievances. Five men were killed and thirty-five wounded and hutments and buildings were fiercely ablaze.

While I was thus at large, General Botha, our Prime Minister, arrived from South Africa on his way to the conference at Versailles, and I received a message asking me to call on him at the Savoy. I went at once and found him discussing the peace negotiations with General Smuts. They were perturbed at the trend of things. General Botha said that we in South Africa had experienced the benefit of generous treatment of the vanquished by the victor,



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and he and General Smuts agreed that it was a mistaken policy to impose humiliating conditions on a beaten enemy.

I listened to them with absorbed attention for these two men had counted much in my life. General Botha I had first seen on the night of the Spionkop battle more then eighteen years ago, when he appeared among our shaken discouraged men to wrest victory from defeat. In the long travail of the Boer War he was our commander-in-chief and he was steadfast and unwavering to the end. In later years I learned from him the faith I still hold: that for South Africa the only path is one of friendship between the English and the Dutch, and eventual fusion into common nationhood.

As for General Smuts, I had served under him in the old guerrilla days as a boy, and we had experienced many dangers and adventures together. Afterwards I stood with him in German West and German East; and no shadow has ever fallen upon our long friendship.

They said they had need of me when I returned to South Africa and on this note we parted. I did not realize it at the time, but this meeting was a turning point in my life.

## II

My demobilization still hung fire so I went to Ireland. Dublin was dirty and neglected owing to the unsettled times, and Sackville Street lay in the ruins left by the Easter rebellion. On the day I arrived, the Countess Marcowitz was welcomed home; she had just been released from an English gaol for her share in the rising, and was a local heroine. There was an enormous crowd to meet her. Wooden platforms had been erected from which Sinn Fein leaders addressed the multitude. The Irish are natural orators, and for the moment I was thrilled by their eloquence, but turning it over in bed at my hotel that night, it seemed to me that the talk had mostly been of 'The Harp that Once', of Ireland's former glories and of ancient grudges. So far as I could remember, no speaker came within a century of her present-day troubles and problems.

During one stage of the war, I had served with the 7th Irish Rifles in France and it struck me then as it struck me now, that the Irish politically resemble our Dutch-speaking element in South



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Africa. We too are more concerned with sentimentalisms of the past than with the practical questions of to-day and to-morrow.

I remember how the Irish soldiers sitting around their braziers in the trenches had talked politics whilst German shells howled overhead; and I remember that one night, as I was going the rounds with my batman, Private Freeney, I asked him what it was all about. He summed it up by saying: 'Sorr, it's the prastes and the politicians is at the bottom of all our troubles in the ould counthry.' *Mutatis mutandis* the same can be said of us in South Africa.

There was danger brewing in Dublin. Tanks patrolled the streets, bombing planes droned overhead and the people were in a surly mood. One morning while I was there, the English papers featured concessions the British Government intended giving to Ireland, but the Sinn Fein leaders would have none of them. They placarded Dublin with huge notices 'Damn your concessions, we want our country' and the press fiercely denounced Great Britain and all her works.

I was wearing then the cutaway tunic and the tartan breeks of the Scots Fusiliers. This evoked unfriendly comment as I walked about, and one morning at breakfast, several hardfaced men came in and sat themselves at my table. They demanded to know who I was, where I hailed from, and why I had mingled in the crowds last night.

I told them I was a South African, that I had fought against the British in the old days, and that I had served in France. One of them truculently said that by wearing an English uniform I was wearing the garb of a slave. I replied that in South Africa there were neither conquered nor conquerors and that we were a freer nation within the British Commonwealth than we had been under our own Republics, but they glowered at me and refused to be persuaded. They were, I suppose, a kind of vigilance committee sent to interrogate me and after somewhat threatening advice they left me in peace.

At night, errand boys ran selling broadsheets with patriotic ballads. Most of them were strongly anti-British, others reflected the brooding melancholy of the Irish temperament. Of this type I kept a few:



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### IRISH WARRIORS

*They went forth to battle and always they fell;*
*Their eyes were fixed above their sullen shields*
*They were not weak as one who vainly yields*
*A futile weapon; yet the sad scroll tells*
*How on the hardfought fields always they fell.*

### THE O'RAHILLY 1769

*Now may we turn aside and dry our tears,*
*And comfort us and lay aside our fears.*
*For all is gone—all comely quality*
*All gentleness and hospitality*
*All courtesy and merriment is gone;*
*Our virtues all are withered every one*
*Our music vanished and our skill to sing,*
*Now may we quiet us and quit our moan,*
*Nothing is whole that could be broke, nothing*
*Remains to us of all that was our own.*

### ON THE IRISHMEN EXECUTED IN DUBLIN, MAY 1916

*Pray every man in his abode*
*And let the church bells toll,*
*For those who did not know the road*
*But only knew the goal.*

*Let there be weeping in the land*
*And charity of mind*
*For those who did not understand*
*Because their love was blind.*

*Let no harsh voice applaud their fate*
*Or their clean names decry—*
*The men who had not strength to wait*
*But only strength to die.*

*Their errant scheme that we condemn*
*All perished at a touch:*
*But much should be forgiven them*
*Because they lovéd much.*



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*Come all ye to their requiem*
*Who gave all men can give*
*And be ye slow to follow them*
*And hasty to forgive.*

*And let each man in his abode*
*Pray for each dead man's soul*
*Of those who did not know the road*
*But only saw the goal.*

From Dublin I went to Belfast to stay with a friend I had met in the war and I spent a week there. In the course of it I came to the conclusion that the South Irish have a more passionate love of country, but it is coupled with an unbalanced emotionalism, while the Northerners are practical and levelheaded. If I were an Irishman, my strongest desire would be for an undivided country and an undivided nation but it seems to me that the way of the South is the way of that woman in King Solomon's judgment who preferred the child to be sawn in two rather than compromise with the other claimant.

On returning to London my discharge still hung in the wind, so I took a voyage to the States. Many troopships were conveying American troops back from the war and I secured a passage on one of them.

I embarked at Plymouth and we made, first of all, for the French port of Brest, to take on board 1,500 troops of the Californian Sunrise Division.

At Brest lay a fleet of German merchantmen surrendered under the armistice. Among them were the Cunarders *Kaiserin Augusta, Viktoria, Graf Waldersee, Mannheim,* and *Kribi,* all fine big vessels.

As soon as the soldiers arrived we set sail. I was surprised to find that President Wilson was unpopular with these men. They said he was at Versailles without a mandate from the American people and a young officer described him to me as a visionary without vision. During the voyage the men gave a concert one night and their comic man told us that France had fought for Glory, Britain for More Land, and America for Souvenirs, a statement that was borne out by the many German helmets, meerschaum pipes and other trophies the buddies carried with them.



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After a pleasant crossing we reached New York. Strange and new to me were the tall buildings, the perpetual noise of trains and trams and the clanging of bells throughout the night. I watched the American Grand Fleet come in from the war and I wandered about New York, Boston and Washington for a fortnight. I had always longed to visit the country but now I fell into a mood that was probably a nervous reaction after four years in the field. I became homesick and caught a returning troopship to England.

We had a delegation of Japanese military officers with us, on their way to Versailles. They were cultured, well-educated men who outwardly conformed to Western standards, but I witnessed an amusing lapse. Their chief invited me to join them at tea next morning. At the appointed hour the following day, when I was ushered into their state cabin by an orderly, my host had apparently forgotten about me; for when I entered I found him and his fellow officers squatted on the floor and they were eating strange little cubes of what looked like dried fish from a newspaper spread between them on the carpet. My appearance put them out of countenance for a moment, then they rose and smilingly bade me welcome. They said they were so tired of European food that they were having a blow-out on Japanese army rations for a change. Later we headed into a terrible gale and were glad to make Liverpool alive, although in a raging blizzard.

At the War Office in London long queues were still patiently lined up, but South African demobilization affairs had been transferred to Winchester; there, in June 1919, I obtained my papers at last and was free to return to my country. I was ordered to embark on the *Guildford Castle*, a ship I knew, for she had brought me from le Havre to England after I had been wounded the year before. She was carrying six hundred South African officers and men back to Capetown and I was appointed O.C. troops. Soon after we sailed it dawned on me that I was invested with a delicate task. In commanding soldiers on active service one has the legal sanction of the King's Regulations to fall back on but with hundreds of discharged men unattached to any unit there was no machinery to enforce discipline and I had to rely on moral suasion alone. Luckily for me, officers and men behaved splendidly and my only trouble was a battle at Madeira.

When we cast anchor at Funchal I allowed everyone to go ashore to see the sights. I went too, but after a while I hired a rowboat



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and returned to where the *Guildford* was lying out in the roadstead and throwing off my clothes I dived overboard and swam about in the warm sea. After a spell there came angry shouts from the direction of the land, so I trod water to see what was amiss. I saw a crowd of our men engaged in an affray with Portuguese soldiers and gendarmes, swords and bayonets were flashing in the sun, and there was a great deal of noise; so I swam to the ship, dressed hastily, and was preparing to take a boat to the jetty, when a tug came alongside bringing all our men. Some of them were cut and slashed and most of them were in a bad temper, for having been unarmed, they had come off second best.

The heady *vinho tinto* of the taverns was at the bottom of the trouble. Flushed with this potent liquid a few of the South Africans had started a brawl. Others joined in and when the Portuguese intervened there was a heated *mêlée* at the pierhead which might have ended more seriously than it did had not the harbour tug opportunely come up. This enabled our men to beat a retreat and they returned to the ship with a dozen casualties and ruffled feathers. So ruffled, indeed, that a number of them, still under the influence, demanded from me the keys of the magazine as they intended to arm themselves and to clean up the island. I conferred with the ship's captain who immediately got under weigh, and only then did the tumult cease.

Next morning the delinquents came to apologize. In doing so, one of them said: 'All the same sir, it's the first time I have ever come aboard from a foreign port without a policeman's helmet.' He had a bayonet wound across his forehead but he regarded this as nothing compared to his failure to carry out a time-honoured custom.

From Madeira was a clear run to the Bay, and with Table Mountain rising from the sea and all Africa and a new life stretching beyond, I make a digression.



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# II

## FAMILY AFFAIRS

### I

In the year 1791 my great-grandfather, Jan Frederick Reitz, emigrated to the Cape. He was a naval officer in the employ of Holland and he had taken part in the battle of Doggerbank and other actions against the British.

He must have had friends at court for he came out with papers (which I still possess) signed by the Prince of Orange himself, the then Stadtholder, which probably explains why he secured a lucrative post at Table Bay. In addition to such patronage as he may have enjoyed, he had more business acumen than any of his descendants have since possessed for he grew to be a considerable landowner and he prospered exceedingly.

When the British captured Capetown in 1806 he was relieved of his perquisites but he cherished no rancour for, having raised a family, he sent his sons to be educated in Edinburgh.

One of these was my grandfather, Francis William Reitz, born in 1806. It was intended that he should be christened François Guillaume but the English Chaplain of the fleet, the only divine who was on hand, being unable to spell the French appellation, took it upon himself to compromise on an English rendering—so runs the story in our family.

My grandfather inherited a large estate and many slaves. He became a member of the Legislature and a Justice of the Peace and like other grandees in those spacious times he kept open house; the result being that when he died at a ripe old age most of his acres were gone. He left little land but many children. One was my father, Francis William Reitz the second, born in 1845 in the Cape Colony. By the date of his birth, great events had been shaping the future of South Africa.

Soon after the capture of the Cape by the British, discontent began to spread among the Dutch colonists, or Boers, as they were called. There was an unsuccessful rising in 1815 and the execution of the ringleaders coupled with long native wars and the emanci-



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pation of the slaves resulted in that strange exodus known as the Great Trek. Thousands of Boers abandoned their farms, loaded their wagons, and with their wives and families, their flocks and their herds, they shook the dust of British governance from their feet and headed for the uncharted wilds of the North.

Knowing my countrymen as I do, I think the cause of their leaving was not so much hatred of British rule as a dislike of any rule. For nearly two centuries they had been pioneers in wild country, each man a law unto himself. They had to rely upon their own resources against savage tribes and savage beasts, and they had become a race of individualists acknowledging no authority save that of their flintlocks. They had chafed at the tyranny of the Dutch East India Company and they were equally resentful of British domination, so they moved into the unknown. It was an epic wandering. During the years that followed, lost to view, they trekked across the plains that lie north of the Orange River and, making their way over the ranges of the Drakensbergen, they descended into what is now the province of Natal. There they fought and eventually conquered the powerful Zulus, the bravest and most warlike nation in Africa.

The battles, massacres and hardships they endured have become matter of history and in the end they established the Transvaal Republic in 1852 and the Orange Free State in 1854. During all these years my grandfather remained quietly on his land like most of his neighbours, for the Great Trek was the work of the more nomadic Boers further inland. He raised his large family and when his sons, including my father, were old enough they in turn were sent to Scotland to be educated.

My father returned to the Cape in 1870 having qualified as a barrister. Before settling down he became a diamond digger, entered the Cape Parliament, and married a beautiful Norwegian girl. Then he practised at the bar and in 1875, the infant Free State Republic having set up a Supreme Court of its own, he was offered and accepted the position of its first Chief Justice.

He and my Norwegian mother started by ox-wagon for their new home, a journey that took them nearly three months, and thus it came about that my brothers and I were born and bred in Bloemfontein, the Free State Capital. There were five of us, two older and two younger than myself, and we led a carefree, Tom-Sawyer-like existence. There was no piped water, no railways,



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telephones, or electric lights, and motor-cars and aeroplanes and wireless were still undreamed of. We had a string of Basuto ponies in the stables and the wide uplands teemed with game; so we hunted, fished and rode to our heart's content.

Sir John Brand was President of the Republic; when he died in 1889, my father was elected in his stead and to us boys life became even more interesting.

The country was run on simple lines. When my father wished to summon his Executive he sent my brothers and myself on horseback to collect the members of his Cabinet from their distant farms, and on arrival they lived with us until the deliberations were over, after which they went as they had come.

Sometimes my father had to go on long tours through the country districts and we accompanied him, riding our ponies beside his state coach. He was invariably escorted by a squad of mounted artillerymen. We proudly fell-in with the gunners and we looked on the ancient Krupp muzzle-loader they took along with them as part of the family plate, so to speak.

In the back blocks, commandos would assemble to greet my father and we sat on the roof of his coach to watch the shaggy horsemen galloping by, firing blank charges from their Martinis as they came. At the conclusion of these parades the men dismounted and the President had to walk down the line to shake hands with all of them. On one such occasion there was a family joke that we never forgot.

It was my father's custom to say to each burgher as he went down the line 'good day, good day, how are you?' To which would come the stereotyped reply, 'Very well thank you, Mr. President,' whereupon he said, 'I'm glad, I'm glad,' and passed on to the next man. But once when he asked a greybeard how he did, the old man answered, 'Sir, my wife died last night,' and my father automatically said, 'I'm glad, I'm glad,' and moved on unconscious of the brick he had dropped.

In such manner life flowed easily enough, and we spent a happy childhood. But this idyllic condition was too good to last. Unknown to us, storm clouds were gathering. Up North in the Transvaal, there was increasing friction between the older Boer population and the newcomers who had flocked into the country on the discovery of the gold fields. In the Free State we had hitherto lived on a friendly footing with the British but in 1896 Dr. Jameson's



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ill-starred Raid changed everything overnight and where goodwill had reigned, now came suspicion and distrust. My brothers and I were too young to realize it but the Jameson Raid was a harbinger of war in which we were to be deeply involved and which was to shatter our little universe entire.

## II

The chief result of the Raid was to convince the Transvaal and Free State governments that the British meant to conquer us. A mutual treaty was made, arms and ammunitions were imported in large quantities from Germany and France, and defensive preparations were made.

While these ominous events were shaping, our family affairs underwent a change. My mother died, and in 1896 my father resigned the Presidency of the Free State owing to ill-health. When he recovered we moved to the Transvaal. He was appointed Secretary of State, the second highest position in the country and my brothers and I were put to school at Pretoria.

For the next two years diplomatic relations with Great Britain ran downhill and even in our classrooms we talked of little else than the approaching conflict.

My father naturally took an active part in the negotiations and in the drafting of despatches to the British authorities. I frequently accompanied him to President Kruger's house, where they discussed the situation and I sat an interested listener. At length in October 1899 the storm burst. War was declared and the two republics entered upon their long death struggle. As for myself I was seventeen and I went straight from my classroom into the thick of the fighting, and so did my brothers. The war lasted for nearly three years. The Boers put up a heroic resistance but our leaders, in their blind love of liberty, had pitted us against overwhelming odds. We scored a few spectacular successes in the earlier stages but the weight of men and guns and the power of the whole British Empire were too much for us and at length we were beaten to our knees. In June 1902 peace was made. I went through an exciting time, fraught with dangers and hardships, and had many adventures and many narrow escapes of which I have written elsewhere.[1]

[1] *Commando*, by Deneys Reitz (Faber & Faber, London).



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The declaration of peace found us a scattered family. My father had remarried years before and my stepmother and her young children were refugees in Holland, as was my youngest brother Jack who had gone to the war at the age of twelve. My two older brothers were prisoners of war in Ceylon and Bermuda and my father and I and my next younger brother were the only ones still under arms when the end came. We refused to accept the peace terms and Lord Kitchener ordered us to be put over the border into Portuguese territory. From there my father went to the United States and my brother and I to Madagascar, under the French flag.

I eked out a precarious existence for some years, riding transport by ox-cart from Tamatave to Antananarivo, and my brother went to Mauritius. Ultimately I received a letter from Mrs. Smuts, wife of General Smuts, in which she said that her husband, together with Generals Botha and Hertzog and the other Boer leaders, were at work rebuilding our country from the ruins of the war and if South Africa under British rule was good enough for them, it was good enough for me.

This turned my thoughts strongly homeward, though I could not at first reconcile myself to submission. I attempted to work my passage to America on a tramp steamer as I wanted to find and consult my father. I got as far as a port in the Red Sea but I was wretchedly ill from long-continued bouts of malaria; and after having been knocked about in a brawl with some of the crew, I gave in. I obtained work on a southbound cargo boat and with considerable difficulty managed to make my way back to the Transvaal.

I was a physical wreck and had not General Smuts received word of my condition it would have gone hard with me. For the next three years he and Mrs. Smuts kept me in their own home and for their help and understanding in those dark days I have not sufficient words of gratitude.

In the years that followed, my father learned that the British were treating us generously and he too returned, and one by one my brothers drifted back. Slowly we picked up the threads of life, and our family began to retrieve itself from the tragedy that had overtaken us.

Meanwhile South Africa was marching onward. In 1910 the Act of Union merged the two British colonies and the two former re-



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publics into a single state, and with General Botha as our first Prime Minister it looked as if there was to be peace and unity at last. But the Dutch are an intensely race-conscious people, as determined to maintain their separate identity as are any of those fierce little Balkan communities that have given the world so much trouble. Before long there came rumours that General Botha's policy was too pro-British and that it would lead to our being swamped by the English-speaking section of the population.

The differences increased and opposition against General Botha and General Smuts became widespread. General Hertzog, who had also taken a prominent part in the war, seceded and formed a separate group to combat the South African Party which General Botha had created. These quarrels rent South Africa for many years.

I passed my law examinations and I settled down to practise in the village of Heilbron in the Northern Free State, and before long I was dragged into the political vortex. Tempers ran so high that it was almost impossible to keep out of the ring; I supported Botha and Smuts while the Free Staters went over to General Hertzog almost to a man so I found myself wellnigh alone.

I endured stormy days in the years that followed and at many an angry meeting I was howled down and roughly handled. I made a host of enemies and lost many friends in the course of this senseless feud. Then came the outbreak of the Great War and with it our bigotries came to a head in the shape of a rebellion.

The insurrection started with the capture of the village in which I lived. I escaped under cover of dark, and collecting a band of adherents I made my way to the Transvaal where I joined the government forces under General Botha. It took us several months to quell the rising and there were heavy casualties on both sides. General Botha and General Smuts treated the captured rebels with leniency and thus ended this unpleasant affair. Thereafter I served in the campaigns in German West and German East and then I was in France until the armistice.[1]

Now I have come full circle, and I return to the *Guildford Castle* approaching Table Bay.

[1] *Trekking On*, by Deneys Reitz (Faber & Faber, London).



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# III

## CAPETOWN POLITICS AND ZULULAND TRAVELS

### I

During the years of the Great War, our political quarrels had come to look so petty and so narrow that I scarcely gave them a thought and, as I stood on deck, I told myself that nothing would induce me to take part in them again.

But politics, South African politics at any rate, are a habit-forming drug, like alcohol. Even as the ship was berthed, two Cabinet Ministers and a dozen Members of Parliament came aboard, all talking at the same time of the elections and of the iniquities of our opponents. In a few minutes old ties reasserted themselves and before I walked down the gangway I was committed to the fray.

The troops were landed and we marched through the streets of Capetown amid cheering throngs to the city hall where the Mayor addressed us. Then each man set out for his near or distant home and I returned to my quiet little village of Heilbron. I led a settled life for some months, but towards the end of 1919 a General Election was on hand. I was summoned to Pretoria by General Botha and he and General Smuts reminded me of our discussion at the Savoy. The result was that I undertook to stand for Parliament, a decision that was to alter the current of my life for many years.

The political outlook was not reassuring. General Botha had founded the South African Party at the time of Union in 1910 and it had been in power ever since. His followers comprised the moderate Dutch and practically all the English-speaking citizens.

On the other side stood the Nationalist Party led by General Hertzog, a formidable antagonist. He was supported by a large percentage of the Dutch whom we accused of intolerance and racialism but who knew their purpose, and their strong racial



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sentiment carried further than our humdrum appeal to common sense.

The Great War with its nationalistic revival among the smaller nations had given our opponents a tremendous leverage. They had gone from strength to strength and it was disturbingly clear that the South African Party was on the down grade. To counter this, delegates came from all over the Union to attend a gathering at Bloemfontein at which General Botha was to preside.

On the appointed day a vast crowd was assembled in the hall and when he entered we rose as one man to cheer him. He looked ill and worn. In Paris he had fruitlessly striven against the peace terms and the strain of this, following the tension of the war, had undermined his health; as he spoke we realized that he was a stricken man.

General Botha told us in homely words of his desire for peace and for unity. We listened to him with rapt attention but we were hearing him for the last time. A week later he died. In the sorrow of this great loss we were fortunate in having General Smuts to step into the breach, and he became Prime Minister.

The elections now began. Rural orators thundered from every platform; newspapers conducted heated propaganda, and we of the South African Party expounded the gospel of peace and goodwill in language as violent as that of our enemies whom we accused of disseminating hatred and discord; the country was in a turmoil. It was almost worse than the trenches. I held scores of rowdy meetings, fought three strenuous (and expensive) contests within a year, and when the shouting and the tumult died I found myself a Member of Parliament. General Smuts offered me the Portfolio of Crown Lands and Irrigation.

The campaign had been a furious one and the South African Party emerged in a weakened condition, but with a small majority that still enabled it to carry on.

At this long distance it hardly matters, but the new government was made up as follows:

General Smuts, Sir Thomas Smartt, Colonel Mentz, Mr. Patrick Duncan, Nicolas de Wet, Sir Thomas Watt, F. S. Malan, H. Burton, and myself.

So now I was a Cabinet Minister, with dominion over palm and pine, as it were, for I was given charge of all the public domains of South Africa. These lie chiefly in the remoter regions; there are



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jungles and deserts and swamps; there are forests and high mountain ranges and little-known tracts inhabited by wild beasts and wild men. It was a fascinating task, but there was a fly in the ointment. With our party daily losing strength and with our Nationalist opponents coming strongly up behind there was insecurity of tenure and my new kingdom was a precarious one. However, I was sworn in by the Governor-General Lord Buxton and before him, in April 1921, I promised allegiance to His Majesty King George V and I took my seat in Parliament.

Years afterwards some legal pundit discovered an Act which imposed a fine of so much per diem on any man who sat in Parliament or in Cabinet without being a British subject and it was charged against me that having refused the terms of the treaty of Vereeniging in 1902 I was neither a British subject nor a Union national.

The penalties were cumulative and by the time my offence was unearthed I had incurred a debt approximating to the German reparations, and a special Bill was hurried through the House to absolve me.

But all this was still in the future, and meanwhile I sat through my first Parliamentary Session at Capetown, rather bored by the monotonous debates. As soon as the Session ended I decided to go off on a tour of inspection by way of introduction to my work. From now onward, during the years I was a Cabinet Minister, across other years when I was a private Member of Parliament, and when I held office once more, I was able to see and hear many things; and in the following pages I am recording such of them as seem of interest. It is of these I wish to speak rather than of racial and political differences which mar the happiness of our country; and I intend to leave aside as far as I can the trivialities of party strife. I decided to go to Zululand first of all for I had heard much of the territory but had never visited it before. Accompanied by a few departmental officials I travelled by rail to Durban from where our journey proper was to start.

This was my first ministerial essay and I was new to public honours. On the way from Capetown to Durban I was met by delegations on the platform of nearly every wayside halt and by mayors and magistrates and party leaders. I sat back and pretended I was accustomed to this sort of thing.

From Durban the road took us north through the lovely coast-



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lands of Natal and at the village of Stanger, after some days, we reached the southern border of Zululand.

## II

Zululand is a delectable duchy. South to north it runs from the Tugela River to Portuguese territory and west to east it lies between Swaziland and the Indian Ocean. It is the home of the Zulus, the finest and bravest and fiercest aboriginals in Africa.

Up to not many years ago there were scarcely any Europeans here and its northern parts are still almost unknown.

Due to recent development of the sugar industry there are now large coastal tracts under cane between the Tugela and the Umfolosi rivers and here a number of white planters have settled; but beyond the Umfolosi there were as yet no Europeans except officials and a few traders and missionaries.

The history of Zululand has been a long record of intertribal wars and of wars against the Boers and the British, but to-day there is peace.

My first introduction to the Zulu past was at the village of Stanger. Walking about one morning outside the village I was shown the grave of Chaka, the savage monster under whom the Zulus first rose to power. The grave was an unkempt hollow within a rusted fence put up by a settler to keep his cattle from trampling upon it. The graves of the other Zulu kings are piously tended and they are always marked by thickets of euphorbia trees, yet the body of Chaka, the greatest of them all, lies in an empty corn pit where it was thrown when he was murdered nearly a century before.

I was interested and I have collected information about Chaka. He was born in 1785, son of Senzanagakoma, a petty chief, and Nandi was his mother, so the missionaries say. At the age of sixteen he took service in the army of Dingiswayo, the then Zulu king, and incidentally their first king I have been able to obtain any knowledge of. Chaka showed such courage that he rose high. There is a legend that he owed his subsequent career to an Englishman, Dr. Cowan, who in 1809 was sent by Lord Caledon, Governor of the Cape, to seek an overland trade route to Delagoa Bay. Cowan, it is said, reached Port Natal, where Durban now stands, by ship and from there he made his way to Dingiswayo's kraal. He was hospitably received and remained there for six months. The Zulus



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say he told Chaka that British troops conquered by the use of the bayonet and Chaka remembered his words.

Ultimately, so runs the tale, Dr. Cowan went towards Portuguese East and he was murdered by the Quabe clan on the Maputo river. He was charged with sorcery. The witchdoctors accused him of having crossed the ocean in a shell and of having demanded elephants' tusks for food, so he was put to death.

When Dingiswayo died in 1816 Chaka, though not of the royal blood, murdered the heirs and seized the vacant kingship and he made good his title by effecting a change in their fighting methods that revolutionized native warfare in South Africa. Before his time each warrior was armed with a bundle of throwing spears which he hurled at the enemy from a distance, and if these failed their purpose, he decamped. Chaka, bethinking him of the British bayonet, did away with all this. In place of the lighter weapons he introduced the dreaded *iklwa*, a single broad-bladed stabbing spear to be used only at close quarters, and he insisted on stern discipline.

With his new-model army he took the field and his soldiers swept all before them. The javelin-throwing tribes could not stand against his *impis* wielding the weapon he had devised, and his name was a terror in the land. He conquered such subordinate Zulu forces as ventured to oppose him and enlisted the survivors in his ranks. When he had sixty thousand fighting men under his command he started upon a bloodstained course beyond his own borders and his regiments harried far and wide. They raided deep into the Eastern Cape Colony and on the plateaux where the Transvaal and Free State provinces subsequently arose, they destroyed the native inhabitants to such an extent that even into our times the scanty population of the high-veld bears witness to their ferocity.

Chaka gave no quarter. In six years, so it is said, more than three millions fell victims to his stabbing spears; and having eliminated his foes, his blood lust turned upon his own people and he killed for the sake of killing. If a warrior dropped his shield on parade, Chaka ordered him to be cut down. If Chaka fell ill, twenty were strangled to ease his pain. When his mother Nandi died, six thousand men and women were clubbed to death. If a European trader ventured to the royal kraal two hundred were executed to impress the visitor with his omnipotence.



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Accounts are extant by men like Isaacs and Fynn and Captain Gardiner of the Royal Navy, who witnessed many of his atrocities, and they calculate that he put to death more than eighty thousand of his subjects before Nemesis overtook him. He went so long unscathed because by Zulu tradition a commoner may not lay hands upon a king, no matter how heinous his conduct.

But in 1826 his two brothers Dingaan and Mahlangaga took courage. One evening as Chaka sat gloating over a fresh pile of slain they crept up on him from behind and drove home the stabbing spears he had himself invented. The Zulus have it that on receiving the mortal thrusts he stood up, and seeing who his assassins were he exclaimed 'Sons of our father, what is this ye do,' and like Caesar, he bowed him to his fate. His corpse was wrapped in a green ox-hide and contemptuously thrown into the corn pit where it still lies.

I asked an old Zulu headman why they do not honour his grave and he said: 'The other kings slew to maintain law and order, but he killed out of wantonness, so he alone lies unhonoured.'

Chaka was succeeded by Dingaan, a man scarcely less cruel than the man he had murdered. He made the mistake of attempting to match himself against the Boer pioneers who from 1836 onwards began to cross the Drakensbergen into Natal. He lured their leader and sixty of his men into his kraal at Umgunghlovu and brutally massacred them, and his *impis* killed hundreds of their women and children. But the remaining Boers exacted stern retribution. They mustered only eight hundred men and this small force defeated his armies and burnt his capital in 1838.

Dingaan fled north and after wandering destitute for months he was murdered on the Pongola river by the natives living there.

He was followed by Panda; Panda by Cetewayo, Cetewayo by Dinizulu and Dinizulu by Solomon the present king.

## III

At Stanger I was delayed for nearly a week, discussing local problems of which, as I was to learn during my term of office, a fertile crop springs up whenever news gets round that there is a Cabinet Minister in the neighbourhood. After that we forded the Tugela and we went via N'Gunghlove (the place of elephants) to Eshowe. We rode across grassy savannahs and, further inland, the



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green hills of Zululand rose tier upon tier towards the western mountains. Kraals dotted the slopes and herds of sleek cattle grazed on all sides. Frequently we saw parties of Zulu on the road, both men and women splendidly built. The young bloods carried shields and the short-handled spears that Chaka had bequeathed them, and they wore ostrich feathers in their hair.

From Eshowe we rode to the Nkwalini river, through good cattle country, but at present unoccupied, and then to Ntambanana, crossing two more rivers where we had trouble with our horses, for the streams ran broad and strong.

From here we turned east to the ocean, making for Richard's Bay to examine its possibilities as a port. Our course ran by several rivers and by palm-fringed lagoons where hippo and crocodile lay basking on the sandbanks. We decided that Richard's Bay was not suitable for a harbour, but we feasted royally from an oyster bed we came upon.

Some distance out, the remains of a ship lay in the surf and George Higgs, a planter who had ridden down with us, told me the following story:

The wreck was that of the *Newark Castle*, a passenger steamer that had gone ashore during a storm in 1906. Of five hundred passengers and crew only three reached land. They were the first mate, a Major Boyd, and a French lady he had dragged to safety, thinking she was his wife. No European lived along this coast, but a party of Zulus appeared, headed by an old *induna* who by signs ordered them along. Finding themselves in custody of beplumed savages with shields and assegais, the unhappy castaways made sure they were for the cooking pot. Higgs on his distant estate was informed of the wreck by his natives, for news travels unaccountably among them, and he went on horseback to see. After a long ride he came on the procession; the woman in tears and the two men plodding along, gloomily resigned to their fate. When they saw him galloping towards them, rifle in hand, they knew they were saved and their relief was unbounded. The French lady in her joy bestowed on the *induna* a gem-studded watch she had found in her pocket after the rescue.

The old Zulu chieftain accepted the trinket and turned it over carefully in his hand. Then he squatted down and with the point of his spear he prised open the cover and scooped out the works, after which he emptied the contents of his snuff horn



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into the receptacle and put the jewelled case to that use ever afterwards.

Higgs said further that among the flotsam thrown on the beach was a watertight chest filled with wads of French bank notes with a face value of fifty thousand pounds. He retrieved this booty and thought he was made for life. He tried to cash in on the Banque de France but that institution refused to pay up and when he went to the Courts he was worsted. He still thinks he was given a raw deal.

From Richard's Bay we turned inland and then north to the Umfolosi river. This stream approaches the Indian Ocean through a vast papyrus swamp stretching as far as the eye can see. A portion of the delta has been reclaimed and here is a settlement of planters who grow sugar cane for the mills.

I had been advised at Capetown that heavy rains up country were threatening mischief in the Umfolozi area and word now came that the floods had reached the plantations. It seemed that the river had brought down a multitude of logs and uprooted trees which had formed a jam in the recesses of the swamp, threatening to submerge the canefields and ruin the settlers.

Hurrying forward we found everyone away. Men, women and children had gone off to the danger point and as a guide and a boat awaited us, we set out. We were rowed through a network of winding channels and creeks shut in by walls of dense papyrus. Now and then we emerged into open water where hippo splashed; and once, as we went beneath a high bank, a dozen or more crocodiles that had been lying asleep above plunged over the side within a few yards of us, dangerously rocking our boat and sending a cloud of spray over our heads.

By four in the afternoon we arrived at the scene of action. We have a saying in South Africa that a 'practical' farmer is one who expects practically everything to be done for him by government. But the Umfolosi men had not waited for government assistance. They had tackled the job themselves. They cut and hewed a way through the swamp until they reached the obstruction, and finding that neither fire nor explosives could shift the barrage they set to work to dig a canal round the north flank to release the imprisoned waters.

When we got there the canal was nearly completed and shortly after, the last men were withdrawn to allow the remaining few



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yards to be blown away with dynamite. There was great excitement. The planters and their families stood out of range as the charges were touched off. With a roar these did their work. A tall column of mud spouted skyward and now the pent-up flood came racing through, with driftwood swirling by and crocodiles turning cartwheels in the current that swept them along. We even saw a hippo battling against the stream, a comic look of dismay on his ugly countenance as if he could not make out what was amiss.

We watched the widening gap for a long hour. Then we rowed back and as we went, we could see by the tidal marks on the papyrus stems that already the waters were receding and that the settlement was saved.

Next day, after much rejoicing, we crossed the Umfolosi at a point above the swamps. We travelled north, passing the Duku-Duku forest, and from there to Somkele and the Hlu-hluwe plains.

We saw plenty of big game; large herds of blue wildebeest, zebra and other antelopes; also a black rhino and lion spoor, but no lion. Beyond the plains we halted on the banks of the M'Kuzi river at the mouth of the Ubombo gorge. I went after birds with a shotgun when we had pitched camp and below the krantz I came on a number of human skulls and bones scattered about; when I made inquiry on my return I was told that this was the battlefield of Itshana where in 1884 Dinizulu, with the help of Boer auxiliaries, had defeated Usibepu. I remembered that many years ago, seated around a fire one night during the South African War, General Botha had told us of this battle in which he had taken part.

## IV

Usibepu was a minor chief who in his youth had commanded a regiment in Cetewayo's army.

Cetewayo was born in 1829 and he became King of the Zulus in 1873, having succeeded Panda who in turn succeeded Dingaan who murdered Chaka. In 1878 Cetewayo declared war on the British and his *impis* invaded Natal. In this war Usibepu played a conspicuous part and he led the attack at Isandhlwana where he inflicted a sanguinary reverse on Lord Chelmsford's troops. He also led the van at the battle of Ulundi, a year later, when the British forces broke the power of the Zulu nation.



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As a result of this defeat Cetewayo was taken prisoner and exiled to St. Helena. During his absence, Usibepu ruled in his stead but in 1882 the Imperial Government restored Cetewayo and Usibepu was relegated to comparative obscurity once more. Having tasted power he was dissatisfied with the new order of things. He picked a quarrel with Cetewayo and soon he and his tribe were raiding into the King's territory, lifting his cattle, killing his subjects and taking their wives.

In March 1883 Cetewayo sent against him an army thrice outnumbering his own but Usibepu led his men with such skill that in the Umsembe valley he defeated the King and killed thousands of his warriors. Not content with this he moved against Cetewayo's kraal at Ulundi, leaving his head kraal fifteen miles from Nongoma and with twelve thousand men started on what must constitute a world's record for a non-stop infantry march.

Mr. Finney, the magistrate at Nongoma, whom I met later, has lived in Zululand all his life. He told me that as a boy he had stood beside the road at sunset watching Usibepu's warriors go by. Usibepu, a short, broad-shouldered man of fifty, rode at their head on a pony and behind him silently came his *impi* on foot. After the fighting men trotted the mat boys, few more than ten or twelve years old, carrying food and sleeping mats for their masters. Mr. Finney said these boys were an invariable adjunct of Zulu warfare, a sort of primitive army service corps following in the wake of their forces. They passed him at dusk at a steady lope and continuing all night, they fell upon Cetewayo at Ulundi by daybreak fifty-six miles from their starting point.

At Ulundi, Cetewayo had assembled his army, his councillors and the old men of the nation to give advice. They were taken completely by surprise. Usibepu's weary men fell upon them and routed them in a single fierce onslaught. Cetewayo himself was wounded and with the remnant of his people he escaped to the Nkandhla forest, his capital going up in flames behind him.

Usibepu was now lord of all Zululand and he held his own until Cetewayo died in 1884. His successor, Dinizulu, decided to call in the help of the Transvaal Boers and by a promise of land and cattle he secured the adherence of three hundred mounted men. Among them was Louis Botha, my chief of later years.

Around that camp fire he told us how they had ridden down the mountains to join Dinizulu at Magut on the Pongola river. Dini-



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zulu had with him 15,000 of Cetewayo's best warriors but they were so terrified of Usibepu that only the presence of the Boer commando persuaded them to go forward at all.

Usibepu knew of their coming and he knew that a strong body of Europeans armed with rifles was with them so he stood on the defensive at Itshana (where we were camped) with the M'Kuzi gorge at his back to secure his retreat. Louis Botha said that when first they came in sight of Usibepu's men they were lined up below the cliff, shaking their assegais, striking their shields and chanting defiant war songs to the stamp of their feet. This so unnerved Dinizulu's oft-defeated ranks that a movement to the rear set in and it was only when the Boer horsemen entered the line that they moved to the attack.

Instantly Usibepu led a charge at the head of his men and Dinizulu's army once more turned tail; then the Boers came into action, each man standing before his horse, and they poured a stream of bullets into the oncoming warriors. Under their close-range volleys Usibepu's men faltered and broke. They fled down the gorge and to this day the sunbleached bones of the dead are strewn where I saw them. General Botha told us he was sorry for Usibepu; he had received hard measure. But for the Boers, he would have held his own.

This stout-hearted old *condottiere* lived to fight many another battle and he died at Nkonjani in 1902, game to the last.

## V

From Itshana we moved on. A road leads up the Ubombo mountains to the magistracy above. At the top stands a stone courthouse and a trading post. From here one overlooks the coastal plains and, south-east, the great lagoons of St. Lucia are visible, while below, the Mkuzi and Pongola rivers wind glistening in the sun. To the north, almost the whole of Swaziland lies in sight.

At the courthouse a deputation of half-breeds awaited me. They were the offspring of John Dunn, an Englishman who had entered Zululand in 1853. He served in Cetewayo's army and he led an adventurous life. He fought in the native wars of those days and Cetewayo made him a chief and allotted him a tribe. To-day, his numerous dun-coloured progeny are still on the lands Cetewayo



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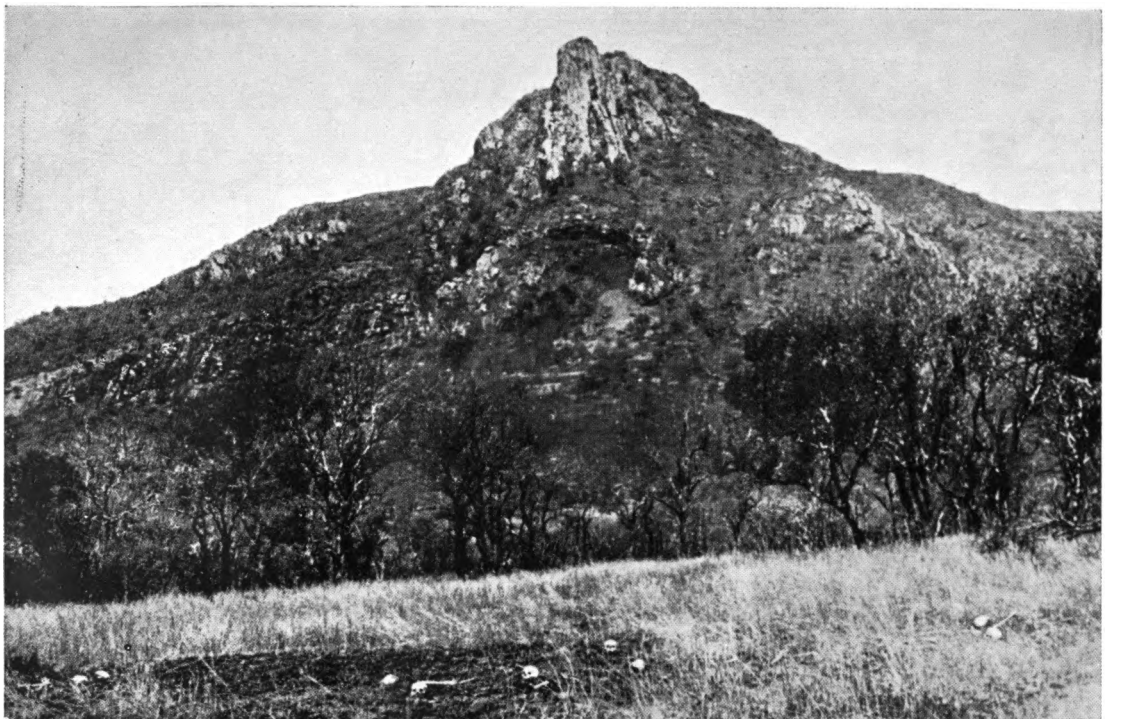

THE ITSHANA BATTLEFIELD

where brave old Usibepu was defeated. Human skulls and bones still litter the foreground

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gave them and they had come to urge that the eldest direct descendant should be recognized by the Union Government as a chieftain, with legal status and emoluments.

I listened to their arguments but I knew, from local talk, that in later years John Dunn had lost favour with the Zulus. At the battle of Ginginhlovu in 1879 he had sat on a chair on an ox-wagon within a British square, for he was ill at the time, and from this coign of vantage he had picked off some thirty of Cetewayo's soldiers with his rifle as they charged.

The Zulus never forgave him this and his heirs carry no influence, so I advised against the petitioners. Old Natal residents who knew John Dunn say that he built himself a comfortable home on the Tugela river. European visitors would find English quarterlies and magazines on his study table and though he still ruled his tribe, his establishment was run on the lines of an English manor house. He attended the races at Durban in a top-hat, morning coat and spats, but he would not enter a house in which there was a white woman. He died in 1892.

Having disposed of the Dunn claim, we descended the far side of the Ubombo and made for the Pongola across which we were ferried by Tonga piccanins to the accompaniment of their rabelaisian boating songs, and we rested at Otobotini for the night.

Purchasing supplies at the trading store next morning, I asked the Goanese clerk behind the counter what was that euphorbia grove on the shoulder of the mountain above Pongolapoort.

He looked uneasily to see that no native was about then he whispered, 'Sir, that very sacred place; no can say more.' I was intrigued, so I asked the local trader. He took me aside, for the matter was taboo and he feared for his custom. He told me that the thicket in question held Dingaan's grave.[1]

[1] The following further details with regard to Dingaan's burial place were supplied by the Chief Native Commissioner for Zululand:

*Pietermaritzburg,*
*14 August 1942.*

When collecting taxes at the Kwayiweni forest (also known as the Hlatikulu forest) in 1921, I paid an informal visit to Chief Mtshakela's kraal not far from the fringe of the forest. This forest is about 18 miles south of the Ingwavuma Magistracy and is the one in which Dingaan took refuge and where he was subsequently killed by the Swazis after his defeat at Blood River in 1838.



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After his defeat by the Boers in 1838 the king had fled north attended only by some of his wives and a few mat boys. Wives? Concubines perhaps? I believe that neither Chaka nor Dingaan ever married and neither of them had any known offspring—if this be so, it is a curious fact in view of the uxorious habits of the average Zulu Kings and Chiefs. Wandering for many months, the fugitives reached the top entrance of the Pongola gorge and making their way down the canyon they had come into the open country beyond. Here, at a spot pointed out to me, the N'Gawo tribe, not recognizing him, killed the whole party.

Among the Zulu, royalty is sacrosanct and for a commoner to lay hands upon a king is an unforgivable offence. Therefore, when the N'Gawos learned that they had put the king to death, there was consternation. So strong is the law that to this day, nearly a century after the event, the N'Gawo tribe is still in coventry. The other Zulus do not associate with them nor is intermarriage permitted.

Being aware of this I asked Mtshakela if he knew where Dingaan had been buried, and to my surprise he replied in the affirmative and stated that he would point out the grave to me when a favourable opportunity offered. We were alone at the time.

Shortly afterwards I was transferred back to Natal and it was not until I became Chief Native Commissioner in 1933 that I again had an opportunity of meeting Mtshakela at his kraal. I was with a number of other officials at the time. I reminded him of our conversation and asked him whether he was now in a position to show me the grave but he replied in the negative and expressed his ignorance of the previous conversation. From his manner I could see that he had been embarrassed by the presence of my friends so I discreetly dropped the matter. He died not long afterwards.

Mtshakela was the son of the late Chief Sambana who died in or about 1914 well over 100 years of age. Sambana was therefore a grown up man at the time of Dingaan's death and probably knew him.

The Nyawo tribe, of which he and Mtshakela were chiefs, have lived on the Ubombo range from early times in an area that was at one time a part of Swaziland.

The reluctance on the part of Mtshakela to show me Dingaan's grave is probably due to a desire not to revive the existence of Dingaan's grave in their midst, a fact which had practically been forgotten, and which might lead to estrangement with the Zulu house. This is my opinion and it is shared by responsible natives.

I am told, although I have forgotten the source of my information, that the late Sir Charles Saunders once saw the grave so that of its existence there can be little doubt.



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I tested this myself for I asked an old *induna* and he growled 'Our daughters are not for the dogs that murdered the king'.

According to the Zulu way of thinking, it is permissible to levy war on their sovereign but to a commoner his person is inviolable—none but a member of the royal house may lay hands upon him. When, for example, Usibepu fell upon Cetewayo at Ulundi in 1883, one of the attacking chiefs named Ralijana stabbed the king in the thigh, not recognizing him in the heat of battle. Though the wound had been given to a king against whom they were in arms and whose capital they had set alight, yet so grave was the fault that Usibepu deposed Ralijana and exiled him to a distant kraal.

Similarly, Chaka escaped the penalty of his crimes as long as he did because no man dared transgress this inflexible rule and it was only when his own brothers took action that the end came.

The N'Gawo tribe, to save face, do not admit that they killed Dingaan. It is considered bad form to raise the subject and when I asked one of them about it he answered hesitantly, 'It is true that the king came among us, but he died of dropsy.'

Leaving Otobotini, we followed down along the left bank of the Pongola river through bush-covered plains teeming with game, and in the broad stream we saw many hippo. Here, too, we saw *Inyala*, a rare and beautiful antelope believed to be found in no other part of Africa. Selous the famous hunter once came all the way from England to secure a single specimen for the British Museum.

This area is sparsely populated by Tonga natives, poorer in physique than the real Zulus from the healthier uplands. Occasionally we came on a trading post occupied by some lonely white man but otherwise no Europeans are settled in these parts.

Inquiries into matters of this kind must be made discreetly as it concerns the resting place of the spirit of a great Zulu King which is always treated with awe and veneration. A number of early Zulu chiefs are buried in the neighbourhood of Umgungundlovu (Dingaan's stad) and the area is hallowed ground for the same reason.

(Sgd.) H. C. Lugg

Mr. Lugg is Chief Native Commissioner for Zululand with an unsurpassed knowledge of the Zulu, their language and their history.



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After those years of war it was pleasant to journey through wild country and it was pleasant to sit at night around a camp fire listening to the hippo snorting in the river below and to the distant grunt of lion.

At a native village I touched at there was a trader with only one eye and he told me this with a show of pride. A neighbouring chief came with his headmen one morning. They were fully armed and in a truculent mood. The chief said his daughter was about to become a mother and he accused the trader of being the culprit. The thing looked serious, but the trader said, 'See, I have only one eye. My father and my grandfather before me had only one eye. No member of my family has ever had two eyes. Let us then await the event. If the child be born with a single eye, condemn me if you will, but otherwise I must be acquitted of the charge.'

The Zulus are a fair-minded race and they regarded this as a reasonable proposition. In due course a coffee-coloured infant made its appearance, but as it had the normal complement of eyes, the chief and his adherents turned up in a body to beg his pardon!

At length we reached Indumu, a trading station near the Portuguese border. Beyond Indumu was a series of lakes or lagoons, the largest of which is Inyameti, a sheet of open water several miles long. The post was in charge of two brothers named Rutherford who had served in France. They had constructed a sort of boat built up out of petrol cases and soap boxes and as I had a retinue of native porters to feed I decided on a cruise to shoot a hippo. Theirs was a frail vessel and it shipped so much water that we provided our two native paddlers with an empty tin apiece for baling purposes. But they had a clearance system of their own. Disdaining the tins, they laid themselves flat on their bellies in the bottom of the punt and as the water filtered through the seams they sucked it into their mouths along with cigarette ends and other jetsam and they squirted the liquid overboard; thus these human bilge pumps kept us afloat.

We came on a school of hippo asleep on a mud bank. Silently we manœuvred our barge to within range. As I was trying to take aim from the prow of my unsteady perch, an old bull lifted his head and saw us. Instantly he bellowed an alarm and the whole herd came rushing by for deeper water, nearly swamping us with



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the wash they raised. A baby hippo that had been asleep on its mother's back missed us by inches in its frantic haste to rejoin its parent.

It was a long time before I had another chance. We had beached our ship to prepare a meal in a small clearing in the surrounding jungle. As I watched the kettle, an enormous bull broke surface sixty or seventy yards out. My rifle lay beside me on the ground and quietly reaching for it I hit him squarely between the eyes from where I sat. He disappeared in a flurry of spray and in less than an hour he rose, feet upward, and floated on the surface.

It was nearing sunset by now and other hippo were closing in, blowing angrily. They are generally more vicious towards dark and we knew the risk of venturing among them at this time of day; so we lassoed the carcass and anchored it to a tree for the night.

The following morning, with the help of a crowd of natives who appeared from the bush, having had news of the kill, we dragged the animal ashore. The sight of fresh meat goes to the natives' heads like wine and there was so much excitement at the cutting up that we had difficulty in rescuing enough of the spoil to satisfy the needs of my own camp.

During the process of dissection, one of the natives held out an old-fashioned leaden bullet of unusual shape which he had prised from the dead hippo's shoulder blade. From the look of it, it must have lain imbedded for many years. An ancient Tonga hunter standing near took the bullet and holding it on his open palm, declared that it had been fired by Sjali, the *Umlungu umkulu* who alone in former days carried a weapon of this calibre. He was speaking of Charles du Pont of whom on our way up I had heard frequent mention as well as of his fellow venturer Robert MacNab. Since then I have met others who knew them both and I have pieced together their story.

## VI

In the 'eighties of last century, Northern Zululand was a sort of Alsatia where the Queen's writ did not run. It was a refuge for lawless characters who lived by the chase and by levying tribute of corn and cattle from the natives.



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Chief among them were Charles du Pont and Robert MacNab.

Du Pont was a Frenchman from Mauritius of whose antecedents I was unable to glean particulars; but Mr. David Forbes, a friend of mine who lives in the eastern Transvaal and who knew MacNab intimately, told me about him.

MacNab's people were prosperous ironfounders in Paisley. His parents died when he was seventeen and he and his brothers inherited the plant. He suffered from an ungovernable temper, and quarrelling with his brothers, he abandoned his patrimony and he shipped before the mast on a sailing vessel bound for the East.

During the voyage he fell foul of the master who clapped him in irons. At Bombay, though still under arrest, he was allowed on shore to stretch his legs. While crossing a bridge he saw the captain fishing in the river below. He loosened a heavy coping stone and dropped it on his head from a considerable height. The captain fell like a log and MacNab fled inland.

He made his way on foot across the breadth of India. He was several times chased and severely thrashed with bamboo rods by natives from whose fields he had stolen rice and at times he was taken before the rajahs of the districts through which he passed. One of these threw him in prison but others helped him along with a few rupees at a time.

At length he reached Calcutta and the first thing he saw was the vessel whose captain he had probably murdered, so he fled once more and ultimately shipped on board a packet bound for South Africa. At Durban he deserted and made his way to Zululand where he joined hands with du Pont, who was already on the spot, and before long they ruled the country between them. They were in the direct line of Drake and Frobisher and the old freebooters.

They gained sway over half a million Zulus. Far from civilization, they upheld a system of their own. They raised levies and warred on surrounding tribes; they exacted toll from natives, they collected ivory and they made and unmade Zulu chiefs.

MacNab once entered a native kraal and finding several inmates down with smallpox he shot the rest to prevent the disease from spreading; and I was told by an eyewitness that on one occasion he shot his Tonga servant whom he had



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sent to the river to fill a bucket of water and who refused to hurry when ordered. Another time he severed a native's arm at the wrist with the blow of an axe for attempting to steal his trek riems.

At one stage MacNab was captured by the Portuguese while he was raiding into their country and he was lodged in gaol at Delagoa Bay. David Forbes went to see him. The gaol consisted of a single large room into which all prisoners were herded irrespective of race or colour or offence. MacNab was the only European and there were forty or fifty natives and half-breeds locked up with him. He had drawn a chalk line half-way across the floor, dividing the prison in two. On his side he sat in solitary state in an armchair beside a fire and he made all the others keep to their own portion of the room.

Du Pont was an equally reckless character. At this very spot where I was camped at Inyameti lake he had started a dispute with a young trader named Sussens as to the ownership of a dead hippo that was floating on the water. Each claimed to have killed the animal and to settle the argument they agreed to a shooting match. A mark was set in a distant tree and Sussens was the first to fire. As he walked forward to observe the effect of his bullet du Pont shot him in the back, killing him instantly.

MacNab and du Pont continued thus for a number of years until they quarrelled over cattle. MacNab, accompanied by a man named Constable, decided to retake them from du Pont. They approached du Pont's wattle and daub house after dark and summoned him forth. Du Pont opened the door and seizing MacNab's right hand as if in greeting shot him through the chest with a revolver held in his left. Then he leaped within and bolted the door. Constable battered it down and entering, he emptied his revolver at random.

Du Pont was standing on a table in the middle of the room and he was brought to the ground with a shattered ankle. From where he lay, aided by a timely flash of lightning, he shot Constable dead. Then he crawled outside and put another bullet into MacNab for full measure.

Strangely enough MacNab survived, but the two men now divided their kingdom. Du Pont shifted across the Portuguese border and he lives there to this day. MacNab moved over to



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Swaziland and both of them long remained powerful figures in their respective spheres.

I saw du Pont some years later, a frail, slightly-built man with silver hair and fluted voice, more like a music master than the fierce desperado he has been. MacNab is dead long since. He lies buried on Inhaca Island near Lourenço Marques.

I remained at Inyameti for a few days and then began the homeward journey. The hippo I shot is the last that has been killed there, for I had the lake and the adjacent land proclaimed a sanctuary and since then they have lived in peace and they are increasing in number.

From Inyameti we recrossed the plains, following up along the banks of the Pongola by the way we had come, once again camping at night by lagoons where lion roared and fish splashed and hippo snorted; and so we came to Otobotini, thence over the Ubombo mountain and down the other side past the Itshani battlefield. From here we swung west up the right bank of the Mkuzi through country inhabited by brave old Usibepu's tribe. After two days we reached Nongoma, the chief magistracy of Zululand, a charming little spot more like an English hamlet than the control centre of half a million savages.

The road that goes through Nongoma forms the boundary line separating Usibepu's people from the main Zulu nation now ruled by Solomon. Usibepu's successor is Chief M'Bogo, whom I did not meet, for he had word that Solomon was to visit me at Nongoma and they are hereditary enemies.

Solomon lives at his royal kraal a few miles from Nongoma. He came attended by a retinue clad in leopard skins and ostrich feathers but he himself was incongruously arrayed in a frock coat and a top hat, so he lacked the unspoilt dignity of his followers. He complained that Cetewayo, his grandfather, had never received the *lobola* (dowry) from the various *indunas* upon whom he had fobbed off his discarded wives; and he asked that the Union Government should assist him in collecting arrears from the defaulting tribes. *Lobola* is paid with cattle and as cattle disputes are the most fruitful cause of fighting among the Zulu the prosecution of this claim would have involved the country in civil war, so I discouraged the request.

From Nongoma we travelled to Melmoth, listening to pleas brought forward by chiefs and headmen, then we returned to



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Stanger, our original point of entry and our Zululand journey was at an end.

I determined, however, to come again and again to this attractive country, our Nationalist opponents and the political situation permitting.



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# IV

## FREEDOM ON THE ORANGE AND PRETORIAN BONDAGE

### I

At Pretoria, our Administrative Capital, I attended to official business and for the next few weeks I was in bondage. Then I broke loose, to the far west, to the lower reaches of the Orange River.

This great stream rises in Basutoland and runs thence across the breadth of South Africa to empty itself into the Atlantic, eight hundred miles away. It drains the entire Free State and much of the Transvaal and Cape Provinces so that in the summer nearly half the waters of the Union roll between its banks.

On the islands towards the coast are European settlements and there was something like civil war among the irrigators owing to quarrels in respect of distribution of water in the canals and furrows. I found them nursing shotguns and rifles across their knees as they fiercely eyed each other from opposite sides of the sluice gates, and it cost me long days of difficult negotiation before the factions came to some kind of agreement.

The most important centre along here was a place called Kakamas. I had operated in these parts as a Boer guerrilla nearly twenty years before. At that time it was a mere outpost with a few reed huts; now it was a thriving hamlet with power-driven mills, electric lights and other signs of progress, including the doubtful blessing of hostile political parties whom I had to address amid the cheers and boos that are an invariable feature at similar gatherings in our rural districts.

From Kakamas we travelled slowly down the left bank of the river and so came to the Aughrabies falls. These are little known on account of the remote desert country in which they lie, but they are among the highest in the world.

Close to the edge of the falls, the river narrows down to a granite portal not more than fifteen yards wide and through this restricted



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gateway the accumulated waters of half a continent plunge down five hundred feet sheer into a mighty gorge not unlike that below the Victoria falls at Livingstone. A lonely farmer lives in the vicinity and one of his sons guided us to a point from where we could watch not only the immense column leaping over the rim, but could see the foaming cauldron far below.

The young fellow had grown up beside the river and he said he knew a way to the bottom of the gorge. The rest of my party hung back, and they were sound judges, for it was a fearsome descent. We had to go by a crevice in the face of the cliff and we slowly made our way, testing each foothold before trying the next until at last we got to a spot where a jutting ledge gave us standing room just above the heaving cataract. We were now some four hundred yards below the falls, and looking up the gorge, we could see the water coming over with a roar of thunder and there stood a cloud of mist and spray. From the falls the torrent came racing down towards us in angry flood throwing up great waves and eddying wildly.

But I watched the driftwood and I noticed that some of the logs slowed down at a certain point and even started to float upstream again. From this I concluded that the water, probably due to submerged rocks, was taking a rotary movement and that for all its frightening aspect, the gorge was not as dangerous as it seemed; and I decided to make a test.

I stripped and dived in and it was as I thought, for there was something of an upstream current and I was able to make headway. I was tossed and buffeted a good deal and at times there was a sensation of remoteness from the outside world; for on either side the walls of the mighty canyon stood so high that but a strip of blue sky showed, making one feel a mere speck in the waste of waters.

I am a good swimmer and I covered the four hundred yards by dint of battling and I was even able to get into a vast cavern behind the fall. The water came over with such force that it set up a downward current of air like a giant ventilator in a mineshaft. It was a vivid experience.

After cruising around in the calm backwater in the rear of the falls I returned the way I had come and rejoined my guide who had been watching my escapade with some alarm. We now climbed up the cliff and after another terrible scramble we reached



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the top in safety. At the Boer homestead the old farmer held up his hands on being told what I had done but when I asked him whether the gorge has been swum before he bluntly said that no one had ever been such a damn fool as to try. All the same my record stands.

Our host propounded the theory that the great cleft up which I had swum was full of diamonds and he may have been right for since then at a desolate spot near the mouth of the Orange has been discovered the fabulously wealthy diamond deposits of Alexander Bay; and experts hold that the gems have been washed down the river.

So rich is the occurrence and the diamonds are strewn in such profusion that the government has enclosed the area with wire entanglements and men armed with machine-guns stand guard night and day. Picked searchers under close supervision collect the glittering spoil and war planes are used to convey the treasure across the intervening desert. Much later, I was to make further contact with the Orange River islands, the falls, and Alexander Bay, but for the present we moved into Namaqualand.

This vast tract lies south of the lower Orange. Much of it is barren and rainless but it is inhabited by Boer farmers ever on the rove in search of grazing and water. They are a fine hardy type and I renewed acquaintance with many of them who had been under arms with us against the British in the old days. They are devoted to Namaqualand and to them it is fair and beautiful, though not many others would think so.

Nevertheless, there is a fascination here that grows on one and I had learned to respect its hardbitten people during the days of fighting and adventure I had spent among them.

We journeyed as far south as Vanrhynsdorp, the little village that had served as our headquarters in 1902. I saw the graves of comrades who had been killed and I saw the place where I had helped to execute the spy Colaine.

At every town and village I had to deliver a speech, for politics is the ruling passion. For our farmers it takes the place of theatres, cinemas, and sport. It is the national pastime, like bull-fighting in Spain.

When at last we struck the railway line there was a heavy batch of correspondence awaiting me. Among the letters was a request from General Christian de Wet asking that I should visit him. I



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had fought against him in the 1914 rebellion, but I liked and respected the old warhorse so I started out to see him.

When I was a boy he was a member of the Free State Volksraad in the republican time. He entered Bloemfontein once at the head of an armed force to protest against the building of a railway line from the coast; for he held the view, not altogether without subsequent justification, that this dangerous innovation would facilitate an invasion by the British.

In 1899, in the first month of the Boer War, he made a name for himself by surrounding and capturing a large force of British troops near Ladysmith in Natal. I was in that battle and we took over a thousand prisoners. This exploit brought him into prominence and when, before long, disasters fell thick upon us, he was appointed Commandant General of the Free State.

By that time we had been driven from Natal, Bloemfontein was occupied, and all seemed lost. Christian de Wet rose superior to misfortune. Aided by President Steyn, my father's successor, he rallied our disheartened commandos and when the tide of invasion rolled north, he remained in the rear and conducted a brilliant guerrilla campaign. He held out against tremendous odds and his raids and forays and escapes, his feats of endurance and courage won him an international reputation, generously endorsed by the British themselves.

In 1912 there sprang up the feud between the supporters of General Botha and General Hertzog and de Wet supported the latter. At the beginning of the Great War he went into revolt. Because I was a Free Stater and because my father had been President of the Free State he expected me to join his movement and he was bitter because I took up arms on the side of the Botha government. We defeated him at Mushroom Valley and he was captured after a long chase. He was imprisoned, but General Botha sent him back to his farm on parole and there I now found him.

I was shocked at his appearance. Instead of the square virile figure I had known, there stood before me a haggard, shrunken man. His beard was ungroomed, his laces dragged on the ground and his clothes hung loosely on an emaciated body. His hands were swollen with some disease and he tottered in his gait as he came to greet me. I placed him in a chair and asked why he had summoned me, but he was unable to say. He sat with his hands



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pressed against his forehead trying vainly to remember and I had to go off with the question unsolved.

I like to think that knowing his end to be near, in his darkened mind had come the wish to say a last word for remembrance and friendship before he trod the common road. He died shortly after and we decreed him a State funeral. He is buried at the foot of the National Monument at Bloemfontein.

## II

Now I had to return to Pretoria to official servitude for long months, interrupted only by excursions into the country districts to hold political meetings. These were very rowdy at times for our opponents were increasingly aggressive and it was plain to see that our sands were running out. For the rest, I attended to my task and I was called upon to handle more insoluble problems twixt heaven and earth than I had dreamed to lie within the scope of a South African portfolio.

These were so many and so varied that my colleagues and I sometimes ruefully asked ourselves whether Cabinet Ministers in other countries with much larger populations suffered a corresponding increase in burden and if so, how they managed to survive at all.

I learned the joys of helping to run a democracy. Deputations of farmers crowded in demanding higher agricultural prices and they were followed by deputations from the urban centres demanding lower costs of living. Divergent interests of mine-owners and mine-workers had somehow or other to be reconciled. Railwaymen clamoured for better wages and the general public clamoured for decreased fares, the granting of the one making the other a financial impossibility and in either case alienating the political support of the unsuccessful side.

When we promoted an official with an English name we were accused of pandering to the British; if a civil servant bearing a Dutch name was advanced we were accused of racial favouritism. If we taxed the gold mines, Johannesburg and the Reef towns were in an uproar. If we failed to tax them, rural politicians declared that we were in the pay of Hoggenheimer and the capitalists. Stretching a hand to assist one industry brought a flood of demands for equal treatment from a score of other enterprises.



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At every meeting in the country districts we were denounced for spending too much money on the towns and at every urban meeting we were assailed for spending too much on the farmers. Swarms of locusts came from beyond our borders and when we spent a million pounds in exterminating them we were met with legal actions for sums almost equalling that amount in respect of cattle that had died from locust poison.

Then we had to contend with the vagaries of the South African climate. If we budgeted for a heavy maize crop and a shortage of wheat, as like as not, we found ourselves with a shortage of maize and a surplus of wheat by the end of the year.

There came a severe drought in the midlands. We introduced a Bill to assist the victims and while we were debating the matter in Parliament the same people were washed out by torrential rains and a Bill having started life as a drought relief measure was hurriedly changed into a flood relief Act.

And there were the rain-makers, inventors of perpetual motion pumps, infallible water diviners and droves of job hunters. However, we did our best in a sea of troubles and, after all, it was an interesting, eventful life.

Apart from less important difficulties we were faced with a more serious problem before the end of the year. A religious fanatic of the Fingo tribe named Enoch collected a large following from among the natives in the Transkei territory. He predicted the speedy end of the world and advocated defiance of all authority. They called themselves 'Israelites' and they built a fortified camp below Ntabalangu near Queenstown.

We sent a military force to disperse them and when the officer in command called upon Enoch to surrender he led his men to battle. Armed with crude swords and battleaxes the deluded zealots charged down upon the soldiers who opened fire and killed more than two hundred of them.

There was an outcry. The press and the public said, and I rather agreed, that our troops had exceeded the bounds of necessity, as these ignorant savages could have been starved into submission without the shedding of blood. Fortunately the Israelites were distrusted by the other natives and no unrest was caused among the tribes, but the incident served to weaken us still further politically.

I may add that we received many indignant letters from Europe protesting against the massacre of the 'Israelites'. It was thought



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that we had been conducting a large-scale pogrom of our Jewish citizens.

Soon after this, in January 1922, there arose the most serious crisis of our term of office: for we had to face an armed revolt on the gold mines.

It began with a dispute on a colliery, the workers of which laid down their tools. The strike spread to the Reef and the position became aggravated, as the original leaders were superseded by extremists who called a general strike and they resorted to violence.

At the head of the disturbance were Fisher and Spendiff, two Australian communists, and the outbreak assumed alarming proportions. The rank and file of the workers were mainly young Dutchmen from the country districts, brave and reckless and traditionally prepared to settle their quarrels with a rifle.

Revolutionary commandos sprang up overnight and as many of the insurgents had relatives and friends in the rural areas there was the danger that the conflagration might bring about a nation-wide civil war.

In Johannesburg and along the Reef, anarchy reigned. A workers' republic was declared; dissident rebel forces captured the outlying suburbs and townships; police were shot at sight and their barracks and stations were besieged and bombed while incendiarism and street fighting were the order of the day. Johannesburg was completely surrounded and our government troops with difficulty held the inner ring of the city.

As the youngest member of the Cabinet I bore less responsibility than the others, but it was a trying time.

With Johannesburg and the gold mines practically in the hands of the insurgents, General Smuts proclaimed martial law. Fifty thousand mounted burghers were called up and he made a dramatic dash through the rebel lines into Johannesburg. He was fired on at close range, but he got safely through and took command in person.

He attacked them next day with infantry and guns and he surrounded their stronghold at Fordsburg with his horsemen. After causing leaflets to be dropped from aeroplanes warning the women and children to evacuate the town, the government commandos closed in under cover of gunfire and Fordsburg was taken. As our men entered, Fisher and Spendiff shot themselves and the rising collapsed.



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It had been an expensive affair. More than seven hundred people were killed and there was heavy material damage. Politically, the effects were disastrous. Our opponents blamed us for having acted too harshly and our supporters blamed us for not having acted quickly enough, so we were ground between the upper and the nether millstone.

Then, to add to our troubles came the trial of a number of the ringleaders. They were not prosecuted for high treason but for cold-blooded murders of civilians and for the shooting down of natives.

As always, a reaction set in. Thousands may lie unremembered on the field of battle but the public blenches at executions. When five of the worst offenders were sentenced to death, mass meetings were called, petitions were signed, and reprieves were demanded. But we decided to hang these men. They had committed atrocious murders, not in the heat of action, but by deliberately killing non-combatants.

I think we did the right thing in the circumstances, but we paid the penalty that befalls those who do the right thing in a democracy. The revolution cost us heavily in prestige and the executions in the Pretoria gaol cost us even more.

The hanging of a man named Taffy Long did us most harm. He was a soldier with a good war record. He had served at Gallipoli and had been decorated for courage. Every returned soldier in the Union clamoured for his release and Prince Arthur of Connaught (our Governor-General) at first refused to sign the death warrant. Still, he had been found guilty of a brutal murder and we felt that the better soldier he had been the less justification was there for his conduct.

I regretted his fate though in Cabinet I voted for his death. He was a brave man. The evening before he was to die he asked for something to read and he was given a Bible. He looked at the sacred volume, read its title, and sent it spinning through the open door of his cell into the passage beyond. He said: 'Bible! Bible be damned, bring me one of Nat Gould's novels.' He went to his doom next morning singing the Red Flag.

## III

In June, Senhor Brito Commacho, the Governor of Portuguese East, invited me to visit him and he indicated that he would



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arrange an elephant hunt for me in the interior. I did not particularly want to shoot an elephant for I had learned during the East African campaign in 1916 the pity of uselessly slaughtering wild animals; but I did want to see that part of the world and I was glad to get away to calmer surroundings after the excitements of the Rand upheaval.

My last visit to Delagoa Bay had been made under less propitious circumstances. Returning from exile in Madagascar, whither I had gone to escape British rule, many years before, I had worked my passage on a tramp steamer to Lourenço Marques, hoping to reach the Transvaal from there. But the Portuguese immigration laws prohibited a stranger from landing unless he had promise of fixed employment or could make a cash deposit of twenty-five pounds.

I had neither, so I was classed as an undesirable alien and forbidden to leave the ship. The timely intervention of a fellow exile who lent me the requisite amount saved me and I was allowed ashore.

Now it was different. I was a State guest and I was received by the Governor and his staff and a squadron of cavalry escorted me to the Residency.

I spent a few days with Senhor Brito Commacho in friendly discussion of various matters affecting our two countries, then he and I travelled down to the Swaziland border to look into the railway position at Namahacha.

On the bank of the Maputo river we came on a young Englishman standing by a dead elephant he had just shot, and he showed us the body of a hippo floating on the water below. He told us that as he fired at the elephant the hippo broke surface and he bagged it with a second shot. It was wanton butchery for I hold that one is entitled to hunt only for food; but he was so proud of his unique right and left, and I was so newly come from the killing and hanging of human beings, that I refrained from comment.

On our return to the Bay the Governor sent me on the promised expedition up north. I was accompanied by several Portuguese officers and we made for wild country beyond the Limpopo river. Big game was plentiful: zebras and wildebeest, giraffe, koodoo and impala.

At the administrative centre at Magude there was a stockade, garrisoned with soldiers, and the Commandante ordered a war



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dance in my honour. Five thousand Tonga warriors took part, brandishing shields and spears and chanting battle songs.

Then came the elephant hunt. We followed the spoor of a large troop through dense bush for many hours. After a long trail we came up with them and the native guides skilfully brought me near an immense bull carrying what looked like ninety-pound tusks, but as I was about to fire the wind veered and the herd scented us. There was a mighty stampede. Bulls trumpeted, cows rushed about angrily in search of their calves whose squealing added to the din and the whole lot went crashing off into the jungle. That was the last we saw of them. It was a wonderful sight and I trudged contentedly back for fifteen miles to our camp.

The Tonga natives prefer zebra meat to anything else so I went out to shoot one for our servants next morning. A Portuguese medical officer came with me and it did not take us long to come up with a dozen of them. I fired and dropped a big fellow dead in his tracks. Simultaneously the medico loosed off with a diminutive automatic and as the animal fell he flourished his tiny weapon and called out 'o pistole, o pistole' meaning that he had killed the zebra with the Browning.

He was so pleased that I said nothing and when he told his wife about his exploit on our return to camp, she threw her arms around him in fervent embrace. To this day he believes he shot that zebra but I watched the natives cutting it up and I extracted my soft-nosed bullet in a flattened condition from the carcass.

One morning an *askari* brought in a Muscat donkey stallion that had escaped into the scrub more than a year ago. The natives had sometimes caught a glimpse of him running wild with a troop of zebra, but whenever they attempted to catch him he scampered off with his new associates and it was not until now that they had succeeded in cutting him from the herd.

He was a sorry spectacle. His coat was caked with mud and dust and burrs and grass seeds. He looked like a musk-ox with his matted hair and he was covered with scars and bruises where the gentlemen zebras had kicked him, but he had an unquenched impenitent gleam in his eye as if to say that he had had the time of his life and was going again at the first opportunity. The old Portuguese Commandante slapped him under the belly and wished him luck.



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Now I had to return home. I had enjoyed a fine holiday and the Portuguese officers and officials had been so hospitable that I was sorry to leave them. I travelled back to the railway line at Xinavene and thence to ministerial drudgery at Pretoria.

## IV

In August of 1922 I had to go up to Secocoeni's country to look into land questions. It is a wild mountainous region inhabited by an offshoot of the Bapedi tribe and therefore of Basuto origin. The country is called after Secocoeni who was a powerful chief in the days prior to the first Boer war in 1881.

He was the indirect cause of that war which in turn brought about the second Boer war and its incalculable effects on the history of South Africa, so here again I collected such data as I was able to find.

When the Transvaal republic was established in 1852 the Bapedi refused to accept its jurisdiction and when Secocoeni in 1875 became their paramount chief he began to raid and harass the European settlers.

Thomas Burgers was President at the time. He owed his position to the fact that he had been a clergyman of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Cape Colony and the Boers thought it would be a sort of fire insurance to have as head of the state one who stood under Divine guidance.

On assuming office he found that he had acquired an uneasy inheritance. The Boers of those days were rugged unbending Calvinists and when they found that instead of the stern sectarian they had applied for they had saddled themselves with a President who held a broad interpretation on religious subjects, there was trouble. He was a Freemason, he travelled on the Sabbath and he even attended dances when any were given in Pretoria.

His conduct was regarded with such horror that a large party of Boers from the Western Transvaal abandoned their farms and trekked away across the Kalahari desert rather than submit to so impious a ruler.

What was still worse, Secocoeni was marauding and looting from his stronghold at Tjadi and to crown it all, the British Resident at Pretoria intimated that this defiance was causing unrest among the Zulus in Natal and that unless he was brought



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to book Her Majesty's Government would be forced to annex the Transvaal.

Poor Thomas Burgers did not know which way to turn. He had found no favour in the eyes of the people, his coffers were empty, discontent was rife and he had no option but to take the field against the recalcitrant chieftain. He could raise only eight or nine hundred men for most of the Boers refused to serve under one whose dogma was suspect. Even Paul Kruger made it known that he would not be answerable for an expedition led by one of the ungodly and he stayed at home, so Burgers took command in person and he led his half-hearted army against Secocoeni. He found him down the Steelpoort valley and ordered an attack. The men were lukewarm and the attack failed. Other attempts were made, but Secocoeni held his own and after eight months of desultory fighting the campaign was abandoned.

With difficulty the President extricated his force. The enterprise had cost him dear, for the British government carried out its threat, and using the unsuccessful issue as an excuse, troops entered Pretoria, the Queen's sovereignty over the Transvaal was proclaimed, and the republic for the time being ceased to exist.

Secocoeni, having defied the Boers and having helped to bring about their downfall, now defied the British. Two punitive expeditions were sent against him without success and it was not until 1879 that Sir Garnett Wolseley marched in with a strong force of infantry and guns and aided by five thousand Swazi levies he stormed Tjadi and captured Secocoeni.

Now followed the Boer war of 1881. Under the leadership of Paul Kruger and Piet Joubert, the Transvaalers rose in arms against Great Britain. They inflicted a succession of reverses on the troops sent against them and after the disaster of Amajuba, peace was made and the Transvaal regained its independence.

Paul Kruger was made President. He respected Secocoeni for his courage, and finding him still a prisoner he released and placed him at the head of his tribe once more.

But Secocoeni's star had set. A kinsman named Mampoer felt aggrieved at being deprived of the authority he had wielded during the absence of the chief. He stole into Secocoeni's hut one night and stabbed him to death. President Kruger ordered his arrest, but he took refuge with Njabel, a petty chief, who refused to



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surrender him. A commando was sent and after considerable fighting both were captured.

Mampoer was hanged for murder, but Njabel was set at liberty, for he had acted in keeping with tribal usage in refusing to give up one who had taken sanctuary with him.

The President was determined to avoid further trouble and he parcelled out much of Mapoch's country to his burghers to form a permanent garrison. Their descendants still occupy the ground and it was in this very connection I had come.

The old surveys were faulty, beacons had been wrongly placed or removed, water-rights overlapped and numerous difficulties had arisen all of which I was expected to settle out of hand. In the shade of a mimosa tree beside a river I took evidence and listened to claims and counterclaims that had grown ever more complicated during the past forty years. When Parliament met again I put through a Bill which evoked some sort of order out of chaos.

As for Secocoeni's tribe, though dispossessed of most of their land, a portion has been reserved to them. They have remained a fine courageous people, easily distinguishable by their proud bearing and physique from the lesser breeds that surround them.

The member of Parliament for this area had accompanied me. He was an old man who had served in the abortive attacks on Tjadi and he told me the following story:

After President Burgers' unsuccessful attempts, he and his men withdrew up the Steelpoort valley. Their sole transport consisted of a wagon carrying reserve ammunition. It was in charge of a white man who had proved himself such a coward that he had been assigned the servile task of driving the mule team.

At the head of the column rode the President with his officers and about half-way down was the wagon with the discredited driver on the box seat. At one point they passed a boulder-strewn kopje close to the road and as the wagon came abreast, a shot rang out and the driver fell dead. The bullet had been fired by a native warrior who was now seen running off and he was brought to earth mortally wounded.

He was asked why he had selected the man on the wagon for his victim and the brave fellow replied that he had decided to sacrifice his life in order to kill the Boer leader. He had lain in wait and from his hiding-place he had watched the approaching commando. Looking down the ranks he concluded that the only man



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who had been given place of honour on the only vehicle must necessarily be the Boer commander and he stayed his hand while the President and the others went by and he fired at and killed the poltroon who mattered least of all. The burghers were generous enough to let the poor wretch die in ignorance of the fact that he had immolated himself in vain.

Having disposed of local troubles, I moved on, for other questions were calling. I went northward over the Drakensberg escarpment and we descended into the Low Country by Kowyn's pass, then a mere track and terribly steep.

From the foot of forest-clad mountains we travelled on through the bush. We saw little game but the natives complained that lion were causing heavy losses among their stock. At one village we came to they had killed a big male the night before and the carcass lay by the headman's kraal. The skin was in ribbons and the skull was battered in with knobkerries. When I asked why the teeth had all been broken he said 'the teeth were knocked out because these are the teeth that took our cattle'.

We continued, still bearing north through scrub country to the junction of the great and little Letaba rivers. Here again the natives complained of lion. At one stad four men had been seized within the last two months and I saw an old man who had been terribly injured. A lion had dragged him off and then released him; his right eye and nearly half his face was torn away and he was in a dying condition. At night we heard the roaring and there were many tracks, but we saw no lion as the bush was too thick.

We went up along the Sami river to Sibasa's country and then to the chief of the knob-nose kaffirs. Thence over the Zoutpansbergen into the fever-stricken plains that lie towards the Limpopo, our northernmost boundary. I joined a hunting party. Sable antelope, wildebeest, zebra, and koodoo were plentiful but I shot for food only.

Now we turned East of the Wanetsi river, semi-desert thickly covered with mopani trees that always denote a lack of water, and thereafter south on the long homeward trek.



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# V

# WITH GENERAL SMUTS IN NATAL

## I

In the winter of 1923, after we had toiled through a long parliamentary session, General Smuts and I stumped Natal in connection with the proposal for closer union between South Africa and Rhodesia. We held that in the common interest the two countries should draw nearer. On our side of the boundary line, however, the cattle farmers were hostile to the project. They said the Rhodesians with cheap land and cheap native labour would swamp their markets.

Across the way was even more active opposition. The people of Rhodesia were unwilling to be dragged into our race and language squabbles and our ideal of a greater South Africa found little support. We spoke in many towns and villages, but it all came to nothing in the end. A plebiscite was taken in Rhodesia and the result was overwhelmingly against us.

Having said our say, we proceeded to Zululand, for General Smuts wished to examine the prospects of building a harbour on the coast. He had enlisted the services of Sir George Buchanan, a famous marine engineer, and we took with us an escort of mounted police.

I was glad to be in Zululand once more. We travelled by very much the same road I had previously gone. We touched at the Place of Elephants, then across the Umfolosi delta, now rapidly being planted up with sugar cane and then across the Hluhluwe, still swarming with big game. We passed Etshani battlefield with its bleaching skulls and over the Ubombo mountains. From here we turned east, making for the Indian Ocean. We went on horseback for there were no roads. All this expanse was uninhabited by Europeans and the native population consisted of Tongas who seemed to spend most of their time in getting drunk on the juice of the *umlala* palm from which they distil a potent wine.

Herds of zebra and wildebeest grazed on every side and we saw many *inyala*. Unfortunately we also saw many tsetse flies and as



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we rode, these insects darted viciously at our horses and at the mule teams of our two supply wagons and we knew that all our animals would die, although we ourselves were in no danger as the Zululand tsetse fly is a sub-species of the *Pallidipes* and does not carry the germs of sleeping sickness to human beings.

The harm was done, so we continued on our way, for a fly-bitten horse will live for weeks before the poison takes effect; there is even a current belief that not until rain falls does it operate at all.

Near the coast we reached Sibaya, the largest fresh water lake south of the great equatorial lakes of Africa. We followed its western shore, with schools of hippo watching us knee-deep in the water as we passed; then we branched through the Boswani swamp, a tangle of forest and crocodile-infested lagoons, and so came to Sordwana bay where a river empties itself into the sea.

This was one of our objectives, as we hoped that the estuary might be converted into a safe anchorage for ships; and Sir George Buchanan commenced to survey its possibilities while we fished from the rocks with improvised tackle, and explored the surrounding country, and hunted for the pot.

Once we came on a small lake lying dark and still in a gloomy patch of forest. The natives said it was haunted because here, in the old days, those condemned to death by the chiefs were thrown to the crocodiles. So much do they dread the place that they will not allow their children to look upon it and no man is allowed to drink of its water. Indeed there was something so eerie and sinister about the spot that we were glad to ride out into the sunshine again.

George Higgs, my planter friend was with us. He told me that beneath one of the sand dunes at the river mouth lies buried a hoard of ivory. Many years ago a trader named Bishop established himself here. He amassed thousand of tusks which he hid in the sand. He fell ill and his Zulu gunbearer carried him to a longboat and single handed navigated his master down the coast to Durban. Bishop died after landing and the ivory, so says Higgs, still awaits the lucky discoverer.

Sir George Buchanan completed his survey and his report lies buried deep in its pigeonhole at Pretoria. He went down with fever and we had to send him back for medical treatment. The balance of our expedition struck camp and we slowly journeyed



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north, keeping well inland to avoid the heavy going nearer the coastline.

Our way ran over pleasant open country dotted with parklike groves. Game was abundant and in the trees monkeys chattered and swung from the branches. This was the first real holiday General Smuts had enjoyed for many years. He threw off the cares of State and we agreed to forget our political troubles for the time being, so we rode along gaily and he told us many interesting things about his work in the British War Cabinet, in Palestine, and in Italy, and of the peace negotiations at Versailles.

Although we were travelling through fly country, the natives had plenty of cattle. For some unexplained reason this insect is found in belts and is not uniformly distributed as one might expect. The natives can tell the tsetse zones within a hundred yards and they are able to raise stock, despite the scourge. I hold the view, an unpopular one in Zululand, that the fly is not entirely dependent on game and that some form of vegetation, as yet undiscovered, is necessary for its existence.

As we passed the grazing and hunting grounds of the various Tonga chiefs, we were met with ceremonial and the driving up of cattle. News of our approach was bush-telegraphed in advance and they and their warriors appeared with tom-toms and the paraphernalia of the war dance, and brought us the usual gifts. They employ the honorific style of speech like the Orientals. I have a working knowledge of the Bantu dialects so I was able to follow what they said. A chief would step forward to welcome General Smuts in flowery language. If he were a lesser light who could not afford an ox, he would say, 'I bring you my humble tribute of a mangy fowl', whereupon a fat goat would be produced.

If on the other hand, he owned many cattle, the chief said, 'I am a poor man, I bring you a miserable goat'; and a sleek ox would be driven before us to be killed.

Apparently, however, this procedure is sometimes reversed, for David Livingstone in his *Journeys in South Africa* says: 'November 1853. The Bechuanas presented me with a miserable goat, pompously exclaiming "behold an ox".'

Etiquette demands that the gift be accepted but it is considered the height of ill-breeding if the beneficiary keeps for himself more than a few tit-bits. The rest of the meat is to be handed to the chief's retinue to gorge upon.



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In this manner we rode along, and at night we chatted around great camp fires and we slept beneath the stars. Once more we skirted lake Sibaya and, still going north, we reached Kosi lake out of which a river of the same name discharges into the sea.

The broad estuary was covered for miles with fish traps, long wooden palisades that criss-cross from bank to bank. At Kosi Bay was a small mission station in charge of an American preacher. He had an uphill task for the local natives seemed as little anxious to achieve salvation as the rest of our South African tribes. He told us that the inhabitants of the peninsula on the other side of the river had never seen a white man.

This peninsula consists of a tongue of wooded hills twelve or fifteen miles long lying between Kosi lake and the sea. It is densely populated though the missionary could give us no details as he had never been there. On our upward journey we had noticed from a rise near Mungusi that the peninsula was notched at one point and it looked as if there might be an outlet from the lake into the sea; so after we had spent a few days examining our immediate surroundings, General Smuts said he was going to investigate.

Early one morning therefore we forded the river at low tide and rode into the peninsula. At our appearance the natives took to the bush and there was wild alarm. Through glades and clearings we saw them fleeing, the women holding their children and setting up the usual long-drawn wail they produce when they think there is trouble.

General Smuts ordered Lieutenant Hedges of our police patrol to gallop forward and shout greetings. He did so, and before long we heard his stentorian voice echoing among the trees. He called to say that we were friends and after a while several of them began timidly to approach. We told them to overtake the others and reassure them of our intentions. In a few minutes we heard their messages being relayed from rise to rise in the native manner of transmitting news and within the hour confidence was restored.

Men and women came trickling back and some of the bolder spirits were even proffering snuff to Lieutenant Hedges whom they took to be the leader of our party owing to his vocal efforts, his fluent command of the vernacular, and his uniform.

He told us the natives had bolted not so much because of the white men but because in this fly-infested country none of them



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had ever seen a horse; and from the way they stood excitedly round our animals he may have been right.

Our march, begun in consternation, now assumed the appearance of a royal progress. From every direction, men and women and children flocked in to see us ride by. It was rough going, over steep hills with heavy sand underfoot and thick jungle overhead.

At length we came to a hill so steep that it seemed to bar all further advance. To our right, far below, was Kosi Lake and on our left the Indian Ocean. In the lake there were hippo on the mudsills and some were moving beneath the water like submarines. On the other side there were sharks lazily swimming in the surf.

It was an interesting sight, but as our horses could not negotiate the vertical rise before us we were hung up for a long time until the natives hacked a path which enabled us to reach the brim of an appalling slope down which, somehow or other, we managed to scramble to the beach and we now rode along until we came to the gap we had seen from Mungusi.

There was no outlet to the sea, but we found that a mere ridge of sand was all that separated the lake from the ocean. We reckoned that a steam shovel could dig a passage in a few weeks for ships to sail into the land-locked waters behind and we thought we had discovered a harbour for Zululand at last.

Since then, owing to political and financial considerations, nothing further has been done and that low sand dune still awaits the theodolite and the plumb-line to prove its value.

We rode back to camp, making along the firmer waterline to spare our horses and we reached home long after dark.

Two days later we broke up and journeyed parallel with the Portuguese border until we got to Indumu and Inyameti lake where I had previously shot the hippo. We rested our animals here. They fed and showed no outward sign, but with my experience of the tsetse fly in East Africa I knew that all was not well. They dragged their feet and from their pulsing flanks it was clear that the venom was doing its deadly work. In the end, of the horses and mules we took to Kosi Bay not one survived and several of our coloured teamsters succumbed to malarial fever.

At Indumu we were on a rough but practicable road and a car awaited General Smuts and myself. Leaving the rest of the expedition to work southward on their weakened horses, we forged



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ahead, following the track up the left bank of the Pongola as far as Otobotini, then over the Umbombo range and down the other side; from here we travelled along the Mkuzi river and thus to Nongoma.

We passed a little native stad called Baganoma. It was from here that Usibepu started on his record-breaking march to Ulundi and it is here that he lies buried. His grave is surrounded by the customary euphorbia thicket and is carefully tended by his tribe.

At Nongoma ten thousand warriors were assembled to meet us. The Zulu nation is divided into two main sections, the Usutu and the Mahlagazi, and there has been a feud between them since the time of Chaka and Dingaan. To this day faction fights are common, with the killing of men, burning of huts, and the hurried despatch of police contingents to separate them. Each tribe has its own territory and at Nongoma, the road which runs through the village is the dividing line.

Of the ten thousand men gathered in our honour, approximately half were Usutu under King Solomon and the other half were Mahlagazi under their chief M'Bogo, son of Usibepu. In order to prevent trouble, Mr. Finney the head magistrate had given instructions that each clan was to marshal on its own side of the road. He was uneasy, for even at a distance we could hear them hurling taunts and challenges at each other and it was obvious that things might easily get out of hand; especially as we found on approaching that many of them were indulging in the provocative custom of *giya* whereby a man would break rank and rush forward, leaping and stamping, his shield and stabbing spear held threateningly aloft, while he boasted of his prowess in battle and of his victories over the other side. Under this mutual irritant there seemed every chance of a bloody tribal combat; but the Zulu, for all his fierce qualities, is an overgrown child and at the sight of our cavalcade, the Prime Minister riding at our head, King Solomon in top hat and morning coat beside him, and the prospect of speeches (they love oratory as the Irish do), their attention was distracted.

General Smuts mounted a wagon that had been drawn up by way of a rostrum and Mr. Finney called for the royal salute. At a sign from him they gave the '*Bayete, Bayete*' in full-throated roar and for the moment the danger was past. M'Bogo strode out, and turning to his men he commanded them to sit down. They obeyed,



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and Solomon from the wagon gave a similar order, and both sides settled on their haunches. Mr. Finney, who had grown up among them, spoke first. Then Solomon and M'Bogo made us welcome and now Mankulumane stood up to speak.

Mankulumane was a magnificent savage of over ninety years, tall and erect, and every line of his heavy jowl spoke of strength and character. He had been chief counsellor to Cetewayo and Dinizulu as he was now to Solomon, and the Zulus look on him as the greatest orator of all time.

He spoke in court Zulu, a more involved language than is in everyday use but with some knowledge of their tongue and with the help of an interpreter I was able to follow him.

He played upon his audience in masterly fashion. One moment he worked them into a rage and whole batches of warriors sprang to their feet to glower at their hereditary foes across the common border; then by a dexterous turn he sent them rocking with laughter at some witty tale of cattle or the chase.

Next, in lowered tones, he spoke of the former glories of the Zulu people, of the spirits of the dead and of great battles of the past, and when he chided them for their quarrels they sank their heads between their knees and rocked and moaned in unison.

What struck me most in his peroration was his reference to Dinizulu, his former lord.

Dinizulu was sentenced to prison in 1906 by the Ntaal Courts for alleged complicity in the Bambata rising. Many people at the time doubted the justice of the verdict and a barrister uncle of mine, Mr. W. P. Schreiner, went to great personal expense to defend him, free of charge, in a trial that lasted for months. In 1910, when General Botha became Prime Minister of the Union, he released Dinizulu who died soon after. His conviction and imprisonment are still deeply resented by the tribes.

Mankulumane was at Dinizulu's burial and in referring to it in his speech he said: 'I am not a Usutu. I belong to the M'Gangkwe tribe; we were conquered by Panda. But the Usutus, once we submitted, gave us their trust. Although we had fought against them, I rose to high honour, even to being chief counsellor of their kings. Throughout many wars that confidence, once given, was never withdrawn.

'But see how the white man treated Dinizulu! He submitted to them and they pretended to accept his word but it was make-



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believe. When Bambata rose at Nkandhla forest they, whilst lulling the king with soft words, surrounded him. He lies dead of a broken heart.'

Mankulumane ended in slow measured tones and there was dead silence as he finished. All of us were impressed by what he had said, and some of us perhaps a little ashamed.

Then came a war dance, each tribe in its own territory. It was magnificent, but we were relieved when it was over without a breach of the peace. We returned on horseback to Nongoma and the great *impis* marched off in clouds of dust.

Next morning we continued the homeward journey, passing several European villages on the way. At one of these the people told us that a white rhino had recently paid them a visit. There are two kinds in Zululand, the white and the black. The black rhino is smaller and more vicious than the square-lipped variety. Both are shortsighted and inclined to charge at anything they scent but cannot clearly see. On this occasion the white rhino walked through several garden lots, coming away with a tangle of fencing wire around his head. Then he entered the village and lumbered down the street. Seeing the open door of a cottage he put his head inside and dislodged the electric bell and battery, both of which hung on the horn of his nose when he backed out. Unperturbed by this, he ambled into a yard and collected a clothes line and the family washing with all of which he disappeared into the forest beyond. As he went the electric bell made contact and it started to ring while the fencing wires still trailed behind and the multicoloured garments fluttered along his flanks like a battleship on gala day.

A Zululand game ranger told me he was walking along a path once with a native piccanin behind him when they saw a white rhino lying asleep in a clearing. The piccanin ran up and kicked him in the ribs. He started angrily to his feet, but on seeing his tiny aggressor he gave a snort of disgust and moved off.

We went via Eshowe and Melmoth and we passed the spot where Dingaan's capital had stood. Under a rude cairn lie the bones of Piet Retief and his men who were murdered here in 1836.

Further on we went by the place where the Prince Imperial, son of that upstart Napoleon III, was killed by the Zulus. I saw his mother, the Empress Eugénie, in 1917 at Aldershot. She was old and shrunken, but my father had seen her in the hey-day of her



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youth at the Paris Exhibition, and he told me she was then a very beautiful woman.

When we reached the Natal railway line a special train was ready for us and we returned to Pretoria in July 1923.

## II

I worked in office and I went on numerous political and departmental journeys. *Inter alia* I sailed round from Durban to Port Elizabeth and from there I went to the Sundays River valley where Sir Percy FitzPatrick, who wrote *Jock of the Bushveld*, had established a settlement.

Close by, in what is known as the Addo forest, there still exists a small herd of elephant. Up to 1920 there had been over a hundred but the fruitgrowers in the valley complained of the damage they were doing and a noted hunter was sent to thin them out.

He shot ninety and there now remained only about a dozen whose execution was also being demanded, but I resisted the pressure and I proclaimed the forest a sanctuary. To-day the herd is breeding up well and buffalo and other game are likewise increasing.

A friend of mine, Nat Harvey, who lives close by, said he saw the elephants in his dam one hot morning. They were drawing up water with their trunks, sluicing their bodies with obvious enjoyment. He swears that an old bull started to squirt the sloping wall of the dam until he had a mud slide. Then he clambered out and went along the crest until he reached the top of the chute he had made and sitting on his hams he slid down. He hit the water below with a tremendous splash and he was so pleased with his performance that he began afresh and before long the other elephants followed his example, each making a slide and tobogganing into the dam. They continued at their game for more than an hour; then they marched off into the bush, flapping their ears, waving their trunks and pushing and jostling each other in high good humour.

Nat Harvey treated me to a wonderful stew which he said was veal, but I knew it was buffalo calf he had poached; for I had noticed the skin pegged down behind his stable. As an accessory after the fact, and as the dish was beyond praise, I kept my own counsel.



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In former years the Sundays River valley was a prosperous centre of the ostrich feather industry. With the advent of the motor-car, however, the fashion changed and women ceased wearing plumes. Most of the ostrich farmers were ruined and the great birds have largely disappeared. None the less one still occasionally sees a few of them in the paddocks as there is some demand for the feathers to be made into mops and dusters.

And I learned of another use for ostriches. Nat Harvey and I were standing before his house one evening when a native boy brought him a letter from a neighbour asking for the loan of two of his birds.

I inquired what on earth the man wanted to borrow ostriches for and I was told they were needed to weed his lawn. It appears that round here a troublesome growth of spiked thorn (dubbeltjies) springs up, which if left undisturbed kills off the grass, and as ostriches eagerly graze the thorn they are used as animated weeding machines.

On my return to Pretoria I stayed at home for a week, after which I set off on an expedition to the Sabie and Komati low country of the Eastern Transvaal. I wanted to look into the possibilities of establishing a permanent reserve in order to prevent the extermination of the big game.

The Sabie river area was already a game sanctuary in the sense that hunting was forbidden, but it had no legal standing. President Kruger constituted it in 1898, but no safeguarding law had ever been passed, and as things stood there was the ever-present danger that under political pressure it might be abolished.

This was no idle fear because the sheep farmers of the high-veld had long been conducting an agitation to shoot out the game to enable them to put these parts to winter grazing. They were a powerful group and already, under duress, the government had at various times been forced to excise portions of the reserve on the same principle as the Russian sleigh-driver who threw some of his passengers to the wolves to save the rest. It seemed to me that if a stand was not made now it would soon be too late.

Another difficulty was that more than a third of the ground was privately held and the owners, not unnaturally, complained that their land was useless to them if they were not allowed to shoot the game.

I conceived the idea of striking a bargain by giving them crown



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land outside the reserve in exchange for their farms, and the purpose of my journey was to explore the situation from this angle.

I took with me several officials and expert land valuers and we travelled first of all by rail to Komatipoort on the Portuguese border. Along the Komati river as far as Swaziland the land is all state property and I proposed compensating farm owners in the game reserve with some of this ground.

The country consisted of a bush-covered plain wedged between the Komati river on the one side and the Lebombo mountains on the other and there was a concentration of wildebeest running here such as I have not seen in Africa. We reckoned once that in the course of a single morning we passed fifteen thousand of them and at times we actually had to 'shoo' them from the road, so tame and so plentiful were they. In addition, troops of zebra galloped by and we saw koodoo and sable antelope, and in the river schools of hippo swam undisturbed. No Europeans lived in this country and we encountered only wandering Swazi cattlemen. Having seen the ground, we turned back towards the Sabie river.

I had been in this part of the world as a boy. In the year 1900 we had fought a three days' battle against Lord Roberts' army on the heights above Machadodorp. Under a merciless pounding we ultimately broke and our commandos fled down the valleys, to outward semblance a disorganized mob, but General Botha rallied us at Hectorspruit and he led us by Ship mountain and through the Sabie country to begin the long guerrilla campaign that followed.

Now I was here on a more peaceful errand. We struck in somewhat east of our former trail and progressing slowly, for the bush was dense and there were no roads of any description, we made for a point on the lower Sabie river which we crossed, and after three days we reached a place called Tshokwane, on the Massintonto.

We saw great quantity and variety of game. At one pan on which we emerged, I made special note in my pocketbook of over two hundred wildebeest, many zebra, nineteen sable, two giraffe, several reed buck and a herd of *impala*. As we watched, four stately koodoo bulls trotted into the clearing and behind them ran a couple of warthog, tails in air, with a string of squealing youngsters in their wake—an indelible picture of wild life and wild scenery. After sunset lion roared about our skerm, and Major Scott, of the Land Board, whom I had sent on ahead, had an exciting adventure when two lion stampeded his mules one night.



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His native cook-boy jabbed them off with his assegai as no one could shoot for fear of killing porters and mules in the dark.

We pitched a base camp at Tshokwane and from here we made journeys in all directions to assess the position. Having completed a preliminary survey we worked our way out via Sabie bridge, Pretorius Kop and Mtimba to White River from where it was but a short distance to the railway line and civilization.

To-day all that area has been opened up; roads have been built and thousands of tourists pass comfortably by motor-car through what is now the famous Kruger National Park, but we had to do the journey with mules and pack donkeys.

At Mtimba I met ranger Wolhuter. A lion had pulled him from his horse and as he was being dragged away he managed to unsheathe his knife and he plunged it into the animal's heart.

David Livingstone, who was also mauled by a lion, says in his book that he experienced neither pain nor fear. He propounds the theory that this was due to a merciful dispensation of Providence by virtue of which a mouse in the jaws of a cat or any other creature seized by a beast of prey undergoes a numbing of the senses and a deadening of pain.

Why Providence should permit the major tragedy and only intervene when the damage has been done is a question for theologians, but I asked Wolhuter as to his sensations at the time. He said that so far from feeling no pain he suffered excruciating agony and as for his senses being numbed, every nerve in his body was tense with horror.

Before leaving White River, I attended a meeting of irate sheep farmers. They said they had word that I was down here to set aside the Sabie country as a game reserve and they threatened me with those pains and penalties which, according to them, will befall a Cabinet Minister who pays no heed to those who have a vote to cast.

But I realized that action was necessary if Paul Kruger's dream was to come true and I opposed their demands. When I returned to Pretoria I set about exchanging land and drafting a Bill designed to turn the Sabie reserve into a nature sanctuary for all time.

It was not given me to complete this task and the Kruger National Park is the work of my successor in office, but I like to think that I helped to prepare its foundations. Also, I came back from that expedition with an abiding love of the Low Country and its inhabitants that was considerably to influence me in later years.



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# VI

## A STORMY YEAR IN THE SOUTH

### I

It was the end of 1923 by now and at the various Cabinet meetings I attended after my return to Pretoria I found that General Smuts and the other Ministers were perturbed at the political situation. We had lost a number of by-elections, our parliamentary majority had dwindled to vanishing point, and from towns and country came the rumble of discontent.

The South African Party had been in office since 1910. It had guided the Union through the Botha-Hertzog troubles, through the 1914 rebellion, the Great War and the 1922 insurrection, and its enemies had multiplied as time rolled on.

To fill our cup, came the world depression and a calamitous drought, and our political fortune was at low ebb. So it was clear that the end was in sight.

Parliament assembled at Capetown early in 1924. The opening weeks ran heavily against us and after a stormy course, General Smuts summoned a Cabinet meeting in April to discuss a dissolution. We were sick and tired of the indignities that are forced upon a government with a small majority and we unanimously agreed to go to the country for better or for worse.

There was a dramatic scene in the House that afternoon when the decision was announced. Our own supporters sat glum and lowering for they knew it meant defeat, while there was tremendous shouting and cheering from the opposition benches. General Hertzog and his followers knew that the fight they had waged for so long was won at last.

In this manner a disorderly session ran to an end and now both sides girded their loins for the coming general election. We took the field and for the next six or eight weeks the heavens rang with the din of the hustings and with the mutual recriminations of rival candidates.

Onlookers think the narrow bigotry of South African politics is due to hatred between Dutch and English, but this is not entirely



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correct. It is true that there are always zealots who stir up trouble over questions of race or language but in ordinary life there is comparatively little ill-feeling between the two sections. They intermingle and intermarry freely and they get on well together when left alone by the priests and the politicians.

Since the peace of Vereeniging in 1902 not a blow has been struck, not a shot has been fired, as between one race and the other. The 1914 rebellion was an inner feud between us Dutch and the 1922 upheaval on the Rand was a labour dispute with no racial complexion of any kind.

What in reality lies at the root of our troubles is not hostility between the two peoples, but the difficult psychology of our Afrikaans-speaking community. For nearly three centuries they have been individualists, roving the interior far from constituted authority, every man a law unto himself, and to this day they resent discipline and ordered rule.

No sooner have they set up a leader or a government but they start undermining their own handiwork and all our history has been one of hiving off into bickering factions and of internal quarrels among ourselves.

Even during the Great Trek, the *épopée* of our race, there were petty divisions and sordid jealousies, and under the two republics there was constant civil strife, with opposing commandos chasing each other about the countryside. We are like the Irish; when we have no external enemy we turn upon ourselves.

I was as bad as the rest. I regarded General Hertzog and his supporters with the same unreasoning dislike that a Scottish clansman would look upon a neighbouring faction: and I plunged into the fray with a fierce loyalty to General Smuts, my feudal chief.

I have forgotten the issues of that election, but I kept a record of my share of it. The place-names will be meaningless to anyone not closely acquainted with the geography of our country, but reaching the towns and villages and districts mentioned, involved journeys of many hundreds of miles, sometimes in torrid heat, then again in piercing cold or blinding dust storms.

It involved bad roads and discomfort and hectic meetings, long hours of speechmaking, day after day, for weeks in succession, under crossfire of shouts and abuse and questions, and it required a sound constitution.



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I give my election itinerary to show how seriously we take our politics in South Afriea:

From Capetown to Johannesburg with General Smuts, addressing meeting in Town Hall. Shouted down.

To Rustenburg district holding five meetings in two days. Very hot; very dry.

On tour to Northern, Eastern and Central Transvaal speaking at two and three meetings a day for nearly a fortnight. Then to Krugersdorp, Klerksdorp, Bethal and Heidelberg towns—twelve gatherings.

To the Western Transvaal, five meetings with several banquets and after-dinner speeches thrown in.

To Ermelo and Carolina districts; ten meetings in four days. From there to Kimberley, first vote of confidence of the campaign.

Addressed series of rowdy meetings along the Vaal river alluvial diamond diggings.

(The miners did not allow me to forget our hanging of Taffy Long and the others. Invariably rough house.)

To Port Elizabeth and Somerset East. Six meetings. Back to the Transvaal recombing Heidelberg, Standerton and Rustenburg districts. Two and three meetings a day.

To Northern Transvaal beyond the Olifants river; temperature 105 degrees in the shade and the temperature at some of the meetings still higher.

Doubled back by rail to the Cape Province to hold meetings in the north-western district of Namaqualand.

To Wellington, second vote of confidence; elsewhere only votes of no-confidence.

To Sundays river valley and then up through the Midlands into the Kalahari desert to try the sparsely populated cattle areas.

I had to finish this portion of my tour at a town called Kuruman and I was told that a warm reception awaited me there. It was worse than that. A wapinshaw was being held on the commonage and a record crowd had assembled, for apart from the military display and the lure of a political meeting, the first aeroplane to visit these parts was to give a demonstration of machine gunning and bomb dropping.

As the village hove in sight I realized that something was amiss.



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Horsemen were galloping wildly and people ran in all directions. Arriving on the scene I found that the air force pilot had dropped a 20 lb. Cooper bomb among the spectators by mistake, killing six and wounding forty.

It was a grim sight. Three men, a woman, a young girl and a boy were dead and the wounded lay scattered around. For a moment it looked as if they was to be a lynching. Defence officers were being mobbed and there were threats of shooting them out of hand and there came angry shouts that General Smuts and his government had done it on purpose.

Then old Coen Brits, under whom I had served in German East, rode up. In his powerful voice he told them that it was true a bomb had been dropped yet it might just as easily have been a thunderbolt from heaven in which case they would have had to blame the Almighty instead of General Smuts. Strangely enough, his crude logic impressed his hearers and the storm died down though up to midnight knots of men stood muttering at street corners.

Incidentally that bomb blew our election prospects in this quarter sky high.

'From Kuruman to Olifantshoek, Postmasburg and Griquatown; more meetings in the heat of the desert, holding forth from town hall platforms or from a wagon or a wool bale or whatever else could serve as a platform. Then to my own constituency at Port Elizabeth for the final round of speeches before polling day.'

If it be considered that the rest of my colleagues in the Cabinet were equally busy and that in addition there were about 200 candidates in the field, all vocal and all active, some idea will be gained of the fervour that attends a general election in South Africa.

And as usual, the hatred and the bitterness, the charges and counter-charges, the broken meetings and the free fights were almost exclusively confined to our Dutch-speaking voters. The English citizens stood aloof from our tribal follies.

The result of the election was disastrous. The Nationalist Party were returned with a large majority and we had to resign from office and hand over the reins of government to General Hertzog and his victorious legions.

I thought the country was doomed, but I had managed to hold



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my seat and I attended the first session of the new Parliament fearing the worst. We found, however, as time went on that a party making violent propaganda while in opposition settles down more soberly when invested with the responsibilities of power; and I had to admit to myself grudgingly that the advent of the Nationalist Party brought no revolutionary changes.

## II

In June 1924, towards the end of the session, I had a pleasant surprise.

There is an institution known as the Empire Parliamentary Association which all Members of Parliament in Great Britain and the Dominions are entitled to join. Periodically the Association sends a group on visits of goodwill to different countries of the Empire and this year South Africa had been chosen as their venue. Some forty or fifty Members of Parliament arrived at Capetown on an extended tour of the Union and Rhodesia and I was elected by ballot as one of the local delegates to accompany them. They were led by Mr. J. H. Thomas, the Dominion Secretary, and a number of us went to a civic function at the town hall to welcome them.

The Mayor delivered an address to which Mr. Thomas replied. He thanked us for the reception, spoke of the object of their journey, of the Empire and the Dominions and then he went on to discuss the workings of the British Constitution. He wound up by saying, 'Ladies and gentlemen, in me you have a splendid example of the beauties of a democracy, for I who was recently an engine driver am now one of His Majesty's Cabinet Ministers.'

There was loud applause and I was called upon to say a few words. I pointed out that in me they had an even finer illustration of the joys of a democracy, for I, who was recently one of His Majesty's Cabinet Ministers, would now be glad of a job as good as an engine driver's.

A few days later the Parliamentarians started off. I found that my father was to accompany us. He was a Member of the Union Senate who had elected him as their representative.

I was the more delighted at this for we had seen but little of each other for a great many years. As children, my brothers and I had been his inseparable companions by coach and on horseback in



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the days when he was President of the Orange Free State Republic, but after he became State Secretary to Paul Kruger we saw less and less of him. Then came the vicissitudes of the Boer War and subsequent exile, he in Texas and I in Madagascar. On our return to South Africa, he became President of the Upper House and I was a struggling lawyer in a small village a thousand miles away, so we met only at rare intervals. The Great War and the post-war activities that followed kept us apart and now, after almost a lifetime, we were to travel together for the next few months.

He soon became the central figure of the expedition for he was a polished raconteur and a mine of information to our overseas guests, and I noted with pleasure how they deferred to him and his wide learning. He was a scholar in the best sense of the term. He had a mastery of Latin and Greek and he spoke French, German, High Dutch, and Afrikaans with equal facility; his command of English and his knowledge of English literature were probably unsurpassed by any in this company of savants, authors, public men, and men of the world that made up our group of Parliamentarians.

My father was a poet too. Not a great poet, but a true poet, for he wrote poetry for the love of it. I have watched him on occasion. His lips would move silently; then he would take an envelope or an odd scrap of paper, and there appeared a ditty, a couplet, or a song.

In the Boer War his Afrikaans poems went far to hearten our sorely tried men in the field, and they are still remembered.

He wrote as easily in English as in Dutch, and I have been told that his parodies of the Recessional, the Wearin' of the Green, and other jingoisms had moved even humourless men like Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener to unwilling laughter.

At Bloemfontein is the grave of an infant sister of mine who died long ago. On her headstone is an inscription which he composed:

*Her tiny feet that never trod*
*This thorny world of ours,*
*Are standing by the Throne of God*
*Amid his fairest flowers.*

When the British ordered us out of the Transvaal in 1902 I saw him, as our train crossed the Portuguese border, sitting motionless for a while, then he took a pad upon his knees and wrote a few lines which he handed me. I have them yet.



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*South Africa*
*Though foreign shores my feet may tread,*
*My hopes for thee are not yet dead.*
*Thy freedom's sun may for a while be set,*
*But not forever; God does not forget.*

His Afrikaans translations from Robert Burns are known to every schoolboy in South Africa, and I even remember a time when I was about seven when I thought my father had originally written these poems in Dutch and that a fellow named Burns had translated them into very indifferent English.

On Dickens and Thackeray and Lord Macaulay and the earlier giants he was an authority but Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns were his heroes. He had been educated in Edinburgh and the British Members of Parliament paid homage to and must have wondered at this gaunt old Boer who talked of *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Rob Roy* and of *Tam O'Shanter* and *The Cottar's Saturday Nicht*, and who loved Scotland so dearly.

## III

The first item on our itinerary was a visit to Basutoland. This territory is the Switzerland of South Africa, a small but mountainous region lying in the middle of the Union but still administered from London after approved mid-Victorian style.

We had been invited to the annual 'Pitso' or Grand Council, held by the paramount chief and his subordinates, and for the benefit of our guests, twenty thousand mounted Basuto natives were assembled, they alone of all our tribes excepting the Transkei being a race of horsemen.

They breed a sturdy little mountain pony and the sight of the long columns winding down the slopes was of absorbing interest.

The Basutos have never been conquered. From 1848 to 1880 the British and Boers in succession tried to capture their fastness at Thaba Bosigo, but without success; and after the Free State Republic under my father's predecessor Sir John Brand had conducted several wars against them, they appealed to Queen Victoria to take them under her wing; and thus Basutoland has remained an independent protectorate to this day.



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They are a fine race, second only to the Zulus in courage and physique.

When I was a boy, our grooms and stablemen were always Basutos. Many of them had served in the border forays and I used to listen to their tales of shields and assegais and battleaxes with which they had ridden into action against the white man's firearms.

The founder of the Basuto nation was the famous chief Moshesh who in the 1830's collected the refugees, fleeing to the safety of the mountains before the *impis* of Chaka and Dingaan, and welded them into a separate nation.

We spent several days attending the Pitso and making journeys to outlying kraals and mission schools to give the Parliamentarians an opportunity of studying this phase of our native problem at first hand.

The Basuto wars were somewhat before my time, but when I was five or six years old, Sir John Brand was President of the Free State and we children had the run of his home. He had been in command against the Basutos and one morning he was telling us about the fighting, when his wife entered the room. After listening a while she unhooked a cutlass from the wall and drawing the blade, she pointed to deep notches along the edge which she said were caused by the skulls of the warriors her husband had killed in battle. Sir John, who stood in awe of his consort, heard her out in silence but presently, when she left us, he looked round to make sure she was not within earshot, then he whispered to us, 'My boys, I never killed a Basuto in my life. Those dents were made by hacking maize stalks for horse fodder.'

I have another memory connected with Basutoland.

After Sir John's death, my father was elected president of the republic in his stead, and we often accompanied him on his official tours. Once, as we were riding across the southern plains that stretch towards the Basuto frontier, we saw three figures showing against the skyline, and galloping thither, we came upon an aged Basuto couple, husband and wife, together with their daughter, a strongly built girl of twenty or so.

Her two parents were so old and decrepit that neither of them could walk and she told us a moving tale. She said that in their youth her father and mother had migrated to what is now Northern Rhodesia, twelve hundred miles away, and she was born there.



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At length, feeling the end of their days to be approaching, the old people were seized with a consuming desire to return to their native land. They were too poor to hire ox or horse and they set out upon their long journey in this wise.

The girl carried her mother forward for twenty or thirty yards, set her down, and returned to fetch her father, whom she similarly carried and placed beside his wife. Then she made two more journeys for the sleeping mats, cooking pots and other belongings.

In such manner they had progressed through both Rhodesias, through the length of the Transvaal and Free State and now their odyssey was nearing its end for already the mountains of Basutoland were showing on the horizon.

She said the tribes on the way had given them food as they passed and she thought they had been three years on the road.

My father was so affected by this brave girl's filial devotion that he sent for a wagon to take them to their destination.

Our Basutoland visit being concluded, we made for the native territories of the Transkei in the Eastern Cape Province.

Most of the British delegates were anxious to study native life and customs on the spot and some of them gave me the impression that they had come to South Africa with a preconceived opinion that our administration was harsh and repressive. Just as during the Great War there were people in England who considered that German soldiers by preference walked about with Belgian babies spitted on their bayonets, so there are people across the water who think the average Dutchman in South Africa walks around like Simon Legree, slashing at every native within reach of his rawhide sjambok. They do not know that our small European community successfully governs eight million natives, including the Zulus, the most warlike savages in Africa, and that there has been unbroken peace for over a generation.

All through our expedition, members of Parliament gave talks on problems of common interest to the Empire and when my round came I spoke on the native question.

I began by saying that when the Boer War broke out, every male adult citizen in the two republics was called to arms. They went off leaving their wives and families, their flocks and their herds and their crops in charge of their native servants and in no single instance that I knew of had that trust been betrayed. Since then the same system holds good. If a farmer goes on business or



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pleasure, he has no hesitation in putting his natives in command during his absence.

In my own case, I said, my wife and I were away for five months every year at the Cape and we always entrusted our two small sons and all our worldly goods to our Zulu houseboys, secure in the knowledge that no harm would befall the infants and that not a teaspoon would be missing on our return.

I pointed out that scores of thousands of natives from Rhodesia and the Protectorates and from as far away as Nyassaland flocked into the Union every year in search of work, a condition that would scarcely obtain if they were badly treated.

One of the English Labour Members rose and said that was all very well, but we refused the native the vote and we refused him social equality. I replied that even civilized nations like the Germans, Italians, Russians and others seemed incapable of making a proper use of the franchise and that being the case, what would be the good of conferring it on aboriginals who, in the nature of things, understood its value still less.

I told him furthermore that in none of their territories had the British given them the vote or social equality.

In how far the dissidents were satisfied with my homily I cannot say, but several of them told me they now saw the question from another angle.

The Transkei was in the grip of a terrible drought, reported to be the worst in sixty years, and the government was hurrying trainload after trainload of foodstuffs into the affected area for free distribution to the natives, a matter that did not escape the notice of our travelling companions.

We made an extensive journey through the reserves and we were present at meetings of the different tribes—Gaikas, Kosas, Galekas, Pondos, Tembus and Fingos, all hereditary enemies but now living amicably side by side under European laws save for an occasional faction fight due to the kaffir beer they indulge in at births or deaths or weddings or any other event affording an excuse.

Not only was the drought creating havoc in the native territories but the economic slump in the outside world was also hitting them hard and as to this a local magistrate told us an amusing story:

A native brought a bale of wool to a European trader for



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despatch to the coast. The trader forwarded the wool but when accounts were made up it was found that owing to the depression, low prices, high railway rates and other causes, the transaction had resulted in a net loss of eighteenpence.

Accordingly, when the unfortunate owner of the bale came to inquire, the storekeeper said, 'Jim, I'm sorry but I had to pay in 1s. 6d. on your behalf which you must refund me.' Jim replied, 'Baas, me no got any money to give you.' The trader, wishing to ease things, said, 'All right, you bring me a chicken to-morrow and we'll call it square.' Next day Jim turned up with two chickens, one under each arm. The kindhearted trader said, 'But Jim, you old fool, I told you to bring only one chicken, why do you bring two?' 'Well, you see Baas, I've got another bale of wool outside for you to send away.'

From the Transkei we made for East London, Port Elizabeth, and other coastal towns, and then north through the Free State, Natal and the Transvaal. We covered a great deal of ground, but we kept to the railways and the beaten track so our journey missed the attraction it might have had if we could have gone among the wild animals and the remoter parts.

It became a rushing from one place to another, led by robed mayors and councillors to inspect halls and swimming baths and abattoirs and we attended municipal banquets and civic functions and listened to long speeches to which we retaliated in kind.

Nevertheless we had interesting companions and the long hours spent on board our official train passed quickly enough with discussions and debates and lectures.

My father excelled at these. No matter how widely the talk ranged he always held his own and embellished the subject of each conversation from his inexhaustible store of general knowledge. And as for South Africa, he spoke with authority on every phase of its history and its economic conditions. From the way his hearers kept jotting down notes I should think the bulk of the information they took back was furnished by him during the course of our travels.

Also, he possessed a keen sense of humour and often he would round off his observations with some witty tale to illustrate his meaning. At Pretoria, after a day spent in showing our guests round the Union Buildings and other places, including President Kruger's old home, the discussions that evening naturally enough



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ran upon the days prior to the Boer War when my father was Secretary of State of the Transvaal. He gave us a vivid account of Paul Kruger and his times; of his giant physical strength, his rugged personality, and the simplicity of his ways.

To demonstrate this last, he said that shortly before the outbreak of hostilities in 1899 they were holding an important Cabinet meeting to discuss the approaching crisis. In the midst of their deliberations the door suddenly flew open and a breathless native servant girl burst unannounced into the council chamber and cried out to the President, 'Baas, baas, the old missus says you must come at once, someone has stolen all the biltong (dried meat) from the clothesline in the back yard.' On hearing this, Paul Kruger sprang to his feet, jammed on his stovepipe hat, and without a word to his colleagues, rushed off to look into the domestic tragedy; and that was the last they saw of him until next morning.

In speaking of those times, the name of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain inevitably cropped up. He it was who penned the despatches from the British Government to the Transvaal that led to the war. My father had to reply and their correspondence became increasingly acrimonious.

I remember how he used to return home from office fuming against Mr. Chamberlain and all his works until my brothers and I regarded him as a sort of Corsican ogre and in both republics he was held in execration as the man who was responsible for the disasters that overtook us.

My father enlarged on Chamberlain's iniquities until some of the British delegates began to take up the cudgels on the other side and a rather uncomfortable argument was started, so he created a diversion. He said, 'Gentlemen, I must tell you of the other Mr. Chamberlain' and he went on to relate that in addition to the Colonial Secretary there had been a man of the same name who manufactured a popular remedy known as Chamberlain's cough mixture. The Boers were under the impression that the vendor of the patent medicine and the writer of the peremptory despatches were identical and he said he heard an old burgher say to President Kruger, 'Chamberlain's politics are damned rotten, but we must admit that his cough mixture (hoes druppels) is very good.' There was hearty laughter at this joke and the talk drifted into calmer waters.



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I heard my father tell them about his library. He had possessed a valuable collection of Roman Dutch law books, ponderous tomes, bound in parchment, printed in heavy black-letter type and couched in archaic Netherlands almost as difficult to read as Chaucer. When we evacuated Pretoria in 1900 on the approach of the British army, our home was left to look after itself, and one morning, soon after Lord Roberts had occupied the city, a fatigue party turned up with a Scotch cart into which they began to load my father's books.

A lady living next door asked the sergeant in charge why they were taking them, and he replied, 'Reading for the troops, mum.' The thought of Tommy Atkins being served out with ten-pound volumes of Grotius and Bijnkershoek by way of light literature moved the Parliamentarians to such mirth that all through the rest of our excursion they broke into smiles at intervals and repeated the tale among themselves.

I may add that someone in authority must have realized the rarity of these works for long after the peace many of them were discovered in the public library and returned to us. In this manner with good fellowship and good cheer, comfortably housed in a luxury train, we 'did' the Union pretty thoroughly. We inspected towns and villages and hamlets, as well as beauty spots, experimental farms and irrigation schemes, and not even Messrs. Thomas Cook & Sons could have made a more thorough job of it.

Then, by invitation of the government of Southern Rhodesia, we headed for Bulawayo and Salisbury.

Before doing so, we lost Mr. Thomas, for he had to hurry back to England to face some political impasse or other. We regretted his departure. By the time he left us everyone called him, 'Jimmy, my boy,' and slapped him on the back in the course of their talks. Earlier on, I saw him address a meeting of Free State farmers for nearly an hour without once taking his pipe from his mouth, a feat that aroused considerable admiration among that hard-smoking community.

He was uncertain in the use of his aspirates. One of the British members assured us that shortly before they sailed, Mr. Thomas took part in a debate in the House of Commons with regard to the Kenya Highlands; and that next morning the London papers reported him in all good faith as having spoken on the *Islands* of Kenya.



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At all events he was a jovial man of the people and we liked his free and easy ways.

While we were looking at President Kruger's statue in Pretoria I told the Parliamentarians the story of Jacob Epstein at work on a statue of one of his amorphous females with the usual distorted limbs and bosom. As he carved, the figure showed signs of coming to life and Epstein, unlike Pygmalion, took no chances for, dropping chisel and mallet, he ran for his life.

My father said this reminded him of another tale, about Mr. Samuel Marks and the Venus de Milo.

Mr. Marks was a Jewish citizen who had come to South Africa many years ago. He started as a rag and bone merchant but in the end, by shrewdness and foresight and by undeviating honesty he amassed a great fortune. He was a personal friend of Paul Kruger and he was ultimately elected to the Union Senate.

He decided to acquire a marble replica of the Venus de Milo which happened to be for sale at Capetown. When the statue arrived in Pretoria and it was unpacked from the crate Mr. Marks was indignant to find that the figure was armless. He blamed the South African railways for careless handling and he lodged a claim for damages, and what is more, said my father, 'the railways paid up'.

In Bulawayo I met a pioneer who had traded and hunted in Rhodesia when Lobengula was King of the Matabele. He told me that Lobengula kept tame crocodiles in a waterhole near his kraal. Offenders were bound hand and foot and placed beside the pool while the king sat watching the reptiles drag their victims under the surface. He also said that the first time Lobengula was presented with a rifle he amused himself by taking potshots at any of his subjects that happened to be passing and woe betide the unfortunate who attempted to evade the royal amenities by running too fast.

The present town of Bulawayo is built on the site of Lobengula's former capital, which was burned down by the Chartered Company's troops in 1893.

Lobengula fled across the Shangani river and was never seen again. It is said he died of dropsy, but I think this is a euphemism, as with Dingaan, and he too was probably murdered by some local tribe.

The Matabele are an offshoot of the Zulu nation. In about



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1835 they broke away from Dingaan and under their chief Moselekatze (or M'Siligaas), they settled on the Pongola for two or three years. Here the circular foundations of their huts can still be seen. Tsetse fly having appeared among their cattle, they moved up and overran the Transvaal, where they settled until driven out by the emigrant Boers. They then moved north into Rhodesia and quickly subjugated the local tribes.

Moselekatze was one of the few Zulu kings of those days to die in peace. I have seen his burial place in a cave at Fort Usher, near Cecil Rhodes's tomb. He was succeeded by Lobengula who reigned until he found his unknown grave in the bush.

The Rhodesian government treated us like princes of the blood and we visited the Zimbabwe ruins, the Matoppos, the Mazoë valley and other places of interest, after which we took train to the Victoria Falls, one of the sights of the world, though a description of its wonders is beyond my power.

We lived in the sumptuous hotel built by the administration and the 5th of October was my father's eightieth birthday. The event was celebrated by a dinner given him by the entire party and I was touched by the high regard in which he stood. Speeches were made and an address was handed him drafted by Mr. Ramsay Muir, the distinguished publicist, signed by all the delegates. I am entitled to set it out in full:

*Victoria Falls,*
*Southern Rhodesia.*
*5th October 1924.*

Dear President Reitz,

We, who have been your travelling companions, thrown together in the most intimate way for over six weeks, desire to seize the occasion of your eightieth birthday not only to congratulate you upon passing another milestone in your long, full, and public-spirited life, but to assure you of the affectionate regard we have learned to hold for you.

One and all, we account it the greatest privilege of our memorable tour that we have had the opportunity of knowing you in your ripe and vigorous old age. You have helped us in many ways of which you are unaware, to appreciate the manliness, courage and generosity of the great people in whose history you have played so large a part.



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Your life has covered almost the whole of the distressing period of discord between the two races upon whose friendship and co-operation the well-being of South Africa depends, and in all these troubles you have played a manful and an honourable part. We like to regard it as a happy augury for the future that you should be spending your eightieth birthday in companionship with public men drawn from the four quarters of the globe—men of five nations and at least three languages, all now united in peace, and in the earnest desire that the comradeship of the peoples whom they represent shall never be broken.

What is more, you celebrate this notable anniversary at one of the remoter outposts of the white man in the dark continent which you and yours have done so much to win for civilization. It is our sincere wish that you may be long spared in the enjoyment of your great powers of public service, and that you may see unbroken peace, a harmony of peoples, and a healthy and just prosperity established beyond the risk of disturbance in the land to which you have devoted your life.

Our pilgrimage to the Falls was the turning point of the Empire expedition and from here began the homeward journey. My father and I accompanied the delegation back to Capetown, and as their ship steamed out we waved farewell to many new friends.



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# VII

## JOURNEYS FROM JOHANNESBURG

### I

I now settled down in Johannesburg to earn a living at law and journalism. I joined a partnership which left me free to move about, and during the years that followed until I again held a South African portfolio I did not vegetate. Almost at once I was employed on an investigation that took me to Swaziland.

This little protectorate lies wedged between the Transvaal on the one side and Zululand and Portuguese East on the other. It owes its present position to the fact that in the early days, when President Kruger tried to obtain access to the Indian Ocean, the British annexed Swaziland as an interposing barrier. Like Basutoland and Bechuanaland, it is administered from Downing Street.

The Swazis are a branch of the Zulu nation that hived off many years ago. From about 1878 to 1891 Umbandine was king of Swaziland and it was to look into a land grant made by him that my services were enlisted.

Before starting off, I spent some days in the Deeds Office at Pretoria looking up the Swaziland records filed there. I found that Umbandine, untutored savage that he was, had worked an ingenious racket. He discovered that in exchange for a written document promising a grant of land or a grant of anything else, he could obtain cash and cattle and unlimited gin. It was easy money and he made an industry of it. He issued enough 'scrip' to paper most of Swaziland. He gave titles to twice as much ground as there was in the whole protectorate and he sold to optimistic purchasers a wide range of superimposed monopolies. He conferred on dozens of licencees the sole right to erect breweries, distilleries, power plants, sawmills, railways, tramlines, schools, hospitals, glassworks, soda water factories and a host of other fantastic privileges.

I even came upon one agreement in which he handed over, for valuable consideration, the non-existent law courts, police force and Orphan Chamber of Swaziland and as a final clean-up I



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lighted on a concession in which he ceded all remaining rights not granted in previous concessions.

It is hard to believe that white men in their senses could have thought they were fooling the king instead of his befooling them, and Lord Milner had made short work of these claims by cancelling the bulk of them. However, he confirmed some of the land deals that had been reported on as genuine.

Among these was a cattle ranch concerning which a dispute had arisen and it was about this that I went down. I travelled in heavy rains to Mbabane, the administrative centre of Swaziland, in search of information, and here I collected such evidence as was available. Then I rode along the mountain slopes to see N'dhlovokazi, the Queen Mother. Her name means 'Great She-Elephant' and she did not belie the title, for she was a huge woman of about seventy, an imperious-looking old lady who governed her son Sibozo, the present king, with a rod of iron.

Sibozo is a son of Bunu, grandson of Umbandine and great-grandson of Umswaas, and these four are the successive kings of Swaziland that I know of.

I failed to extract anything useful from the queen-mother or from the king, and beyond the fact that I was told she had forty thousand golden sovereigns with President Kruger's effigy stamped on every one of them buried under the floor of her hut, I left no wiser than I came.

From the royal kraal I descended to the plains, beautiful park-like country, the young grass soft and green underfoot as an English lawn.

I was making for the home of my friend, Mr. David Forbes, on the black Umbuluzi river. He had intimately known Umbandine and I wished to consult him. I passed quantities of big game on the way, sable, koodoo, roan antelope, etc., and for the first time in my life I saw a pack of wild dogs on the hunt. They were chasing an *impala* doe and the manner in which these savage brutes tore alongside their victim, snatching living flesh from its body as it ran, was a sickening spectacle which I could do nothing to prevent as they were too far off.

Travelling through the bush next day, I came on a novel procession. Several Swazi headmen with their wives and a sprinkling of armed attendants were driving before them a flock of about three hundred goats which they were taking up to N'dhlovokazi.



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It appeared that in addition to being queen-mother, she was also rain-maker in chief, the only woman, so I am told, who has ever held that post among the Bantu; and the natives come from as far north as the Zambezi river to invoke her pluvial powers.

During the recent drought the headmen had clubbed together and they had propitiated her with a substantial gift of livestock in order that rain might fall. Soon after, the heavens broke and for weeks on end South Africa was inundated by the worst floods we had suffered for many years. There had been heavy losses of crops and animals all over the country, especially in Swaziland, and as there were ominous signs of more dirty weather to come, the headmen had concluded that N'dhlovokazi was overdoing the rain-making business and they were now going up with treble the value of their previous donation to beg her to call it off.

I heard a story in Zululand once of a missionary who owned a mackintosh that the natives held to be strong medicine. They said, 'The white man has a magic coat for making rain—whenever he is seen to wear it, lo, the weather is overcast, and rains fall.'

Mr. Forbes received me hospitably and I spent a pleasant week riding with him and watching the herds of game on his ranch. One night there was the grunt of lion round the house and next morning the natives reported that they had killed nine heifers not far from the homestead. A shoot was organized, but we did not come up with the marauders.

Mr. Forbes had many interesting things to tell of Umbandine. He also spoke of the days when he served in the Secocoeni war under President Burgers, and of the days of du Pont and MacNab. He said MacNab was at heart a kindly man, but liable to fits of ungovernable rage, and these were the cause of his many acts of violence rather than inherent brutality. MacNab always travelled on foot, not matter how distant the journey, and he dropped dead one morning at an Indian trading store in Portuguese territory where he had halted for a drink of water. He was on his way to Lourenço Marques and he lies buried on Inyack Island.

Mr. Forbes moves into Swaziland every year for the winter grazing but his real home is on his estate of Atholl near the village of Amsterdam in the Eastern Transvaal. He gave me an amusing account of how this little hamlet received its name.

In 1882 or so, a number of Scotchmen settled in that area which is still known as New Scotland. As time went on, the new-



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comers decided to establish a township and Robert Burns being their patron saint, they agreed to call it 'Roburnia'. Under the law of the land they had to obtain the consent of the head of the state before building lots could be surveyed. Accordingly, a deputation waited upon President Kruger in Pretoria. He gave them a courteous hearing, looked at the blue-prints and charts they laid before him, and agreed to their project.

But as he was about to sign his consent, he looked up for a moment to ask what the village was to be called. ' "Roburnia", your honour,' said the chairman. Hereupon the President flew into a rage and thumping his desk he exclaimed, 'Roburnia, Roburnia, I tell you I won't have any kaffir names in this country,' and turning to his young Hollander secretary he asked him where he was born. 'Amsterdam, sir,' replied the secretary, and the President growled, 'Amsterdam you will call your village and not otherwise.' The discomfited representatives had to submit, and 'Amsterdam' it has remained ever since.

I tried this story on a Scotch audience in Johannesburg at a Burns' nicht gathering later on, but it met with a frigid reception.

I now said good-bye to Mr. Forbes and started back for home, going via Bremersdorp where I saw Charles du Pont at his sister's house. He had come from Portuguese territory to see her and he looked harmless enough, but they say his word is still law on the Maputo river where he lives. No man is allowed to hunt elephant there even if he has a government visa, unless he also has du Pont's permission.

Should this preliminary be omitted, du Pont sends bands of natives to scare away the elephant until the delinquent pays up.

When I reached home the difficulties of Umbandine's concession were settled by arbitration and thus ended a pleasant outing.

## II

Early in 1925 I went on a business trip into German South West, the territory we had invaded and captured in 1915.

It is a large and barren country. It stretches from the Orange river in the south to the Cunene, eight hundred or a thousand miles to the north, and from west to east it lies between the Atlantic Ocean and the Kalahari desert, a width of four hundred miles.

I travelled first of all by rail to Windhoek, the capital, where



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I discussed various matters with the officials at the 'Tinten Palast' (government buildings) and then I returned down the line to Rehoboth to report on an alleged gold strike.

I had been here nine years before under different circumstances. Some companions and I had been following in the wake of the retreating German troops during the 1915 campaign. We clung to the railway track hoping to find water at the stations and sidings but everywhere they had dynamited the wells and bore-holes and tanks.

By the afternoon of the second day we were in a serious plight. Our flasks were empty; we had come too far to return for we would have been dead of thirst before we could reach the nearest water to the rear, and ahead of us almost certainly we would find none, so thorough was the work of demolition we had encountered.

We stumbled along in the heat, our tongues parched and swollen, and the knowledge that the prospect of water was remote increased our sufferings.

Towards evening, when we were approaching the limit of endurance, we came upon a railway engine lying in a dry riverbed where the Germans had wrecked it; and in a corner of the boiler we found a few gallons of water providentially unspilt. This saved our lives and continuing forward we came to Rehoboth where next morning we discovered more water in a little engine that had been overlooked in a shed.

Now I sat on the hotel stoep with a tall glass of iced beer in front of me remembering my previous drouth. The place is the chief town of a race of half-breeds who migrated hither from the Cape Colony about sixty years ago. Their language is a variant of Afrikaans which in turn is a variant of high Dutch, so it requires expert knowledge to understand their talk. They are proud of their near-white origin and their efforts at copying European customs are rather pathetic. They have set up a sort of parliament and a small standing army with muzzle-loaders and flintlocks and they run a law court of their own.

One of them to whom I spoke had original ideas on class distinctions. He had been defeated in one of their periodic elections and he said to me in a disgusted tone what would amount to this, 'Can you believe it; they rejected me, who was born in a bed and in a room, for my opponent who was born on the ground behind a bush.'



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I have modified this, for the original was rather more naturalistic. His outlook was that of a Vere de Vere who had been beaten by a coal heaver.

The Rehoboth half-breeds assisted us in the war and the Germans took heavy toll of them. The mummified corpses I had seen dangling from a tree in 1915 were part of the price they paid for adhering to our cause.

I was unfavourably impressed with the gold occurrence and I now went south to Kalkfontein, a village established by the Germans in olden days, and from here I travelled by car, a ramshackle Ford whose owner, Carl Weidner, was awaiting me. Weidner was a well-known character along the Orange river. He lived at a place called Goodhouse on its banks, where he managed a large citrus estate for an English Company that had commissioned me to report on the property.

Goodhouse[1] lies ninety miles from Kalkfontein through ninety miles of desert. Whenever we met with heavy sand, which was every mile or two, we had to deflate the tyres to half strength to obtain a gripping surface, and as soon as we reached firmer soil we had to get out and pump them back to their original size under a broiling sun, a gruelling task which we performed a dozen times during the day, and it took us sixteen hours to reach our destination.

The area we passed through is inhabited by the Bondelswart tribe of Hottentots and it is hard to understand how any human beings are able to exist in this sterile region. Not long ago they had broken into rebellion and they were bombed into submission by aeroplanes sent from the Union. I met their chief Jacobus Christian at Goodhouse and he gave me his version of the business.

He said there was a dispute with the magistrate with regard to taxes on hunting dogs when suddenly Abraham Morris, the half-breed outlaw, returned from across the Orange and before he knew what was doing there was an armed rising and they were being bombed from the air.

Abraham Morris and his brother Edward were two half-castes, grandsons, it is said, of a Scotch missionary by a Hottentot wife. These two men with their strain of coloured blood were looked down on by the Europeans, and they conceived a violent hatred of all white men in consequence.

[1] Goodhouse '*Ga Daus*', meaning 'Ford of the Sheep' in the Hottentot language.



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From 1906 onwards they assisted the Bondelswart chief Marengo against the Germans until Edward was killed and Abraham was driven into the Cape Colony and exiled. He remained there until the recent mutiny in which he was pursued into the desert and killed by Carl Weidner's son-in-law.

The Bondelswarts, from having been hardy freebooters, are now a fear-haunted people, so terrible was the reckoning by our machines; and I could not but feel sorry for this primitive community overwhelmed by civilization. The impression they left on me was that they were more sinned against than sinning and I doubt whether to this day they know what it was all about.

I enjoyed Carl Weidner's hospitality at Goodhouse for a week and as the temperature stood at 108 degrees in the shade from seven a.m. to five p.m. daily, I spent most of my time swimming in the tepid waters of the Orange river and only after dark by lamplight did we drag forth the ledgers and account books.

Having completed our labours, old Weidner and I worked our passage back to Kalkfontein, once more deflating and inflating the tyres on the way. We reached the village after midnight and found that during hot weather the entire population move their beds into the middle of the main street. So we had to drive with care in order to avoid ramming the sleeping inhabitants.

Next morning, at the court house I saw three bushmen in charge of a European policeman. They were under arrest for murder and this was only the second time in my life that I had seen pure-blooded specimens such as these.

They are a yellow-skinned pygmy race standing about four-foot six, and they have tremendously developed hindquarters which serve them like the camel's hump from which to draw on in lean periods.

The policeman told me that shortly before, while out on patrol, he had come on a bushwoman lying in a small hollow she had scooped in the ground, and she was in the very act of parturition. As he approached, the child made its appearance and the mother, seeing him ride up, hastily scrabbled the new-born infant in the sand to dry it, and holding it close to her body she fled into the bush like any wild animal.

He said he had been present when Mr. van Ryneveld, the magistrate, was killed the year before. They saw a bushman running through the trees and Mr. van Ryneveld, wishing to interrogate him, galloped forward to head him off.



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When brought to bay he pulled out one of the tiny bows they carry and shot his captor with a poisoned dart at a range of a few feet. The magistrate died in great agony in less than an hour and by next morning the body was so decomposed that it fell to pieces when they tried to handle it.

These little bows are about two inches long, beautifully fashioned from what appears to be rhino horn. The arrows are the size of a safety match, of heavy wood, the points covered with a deadly poison brewed from some vegetable toxin or from putrid caterpillars (no one seems to know which). The arrows are carried in a tiny leathern quiver and each has its point sheathed in grass to prevent accidental contact. The bushman also carries his ordinary hunting bow and he uses the smaller weapon in the same way as a gangster might carry an automatic pistol in addition to a larger gun.

On the other hand some people think that bushmen carry these miniature bows and arrows for shooting at the evil spirits with which they believe themselves to be surrounded on all sides.

The fact remains however that in the German time the carrying of these little weapons was strictly forbidden by law on account of shortrange ambushes committed with them on soldiers and police.

From Kalkfontein I travelled back to Windhoek and then to Walvis Bay. Up to now, the only drinking water to be had at this forbidding spot was by distillation from the sea but word had come that a spring had been discovered in the dunes some distance inland and I accompanied a party of inspection. We found a strong supply of fresh water surrounded by reeds and bulrushes and there were many birds. This fountain has since been piped to Walvis Bay and as a result a well-equipped port is arising there.

While we were ploughing along in the sand I heard a police officer ahead of me telling someone how he had been in a blockhouse at Springbokfontein towards the end of the South African War in 1902 and how a Boer sniper had crawled up and shot two of their men through the loopholes.

I pricked up my ears at this and when he had finished I told him I was the sniper in question. He was a jovial Irishman named Drew and he bore no malice for he slapped me on the back and said, 'So it was you, was it, you Dutchman, we must have a drink on it'; and a drink we had when we reached the bay.

From Walvis I returned to Windhoek to interview officials and



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others, and I met a shaggy old Boer hunter whose talk was to send me on a long journey. He hailed from Angola but he had spent some years in a region known as the Kaokoveld which with a wide sweep of his arm, he vaguely described as lying far to the north.

He told me of big game and strange tribes and of many adventures and he told me one story in particular of how, when he was stalking an antelope towards dusk he suddenly saw a goods train crossing the rise.

For a moment he thought he had lost his senses, then he realized that what he was looking at was not a goods train but hundreds of elephant marching head by tail in single file across a hill.

His stories made a strong appeal, and the thought that there was in that distant corner a remnant of the old savage Africa unspoilt as yet by the white man so fired my imagination that I decided that I would go and have a look at it for myself.

## III

I could not start out of hand for I had to return to Capetown to attend Parliament, and there were business and financial arrangements to be made to allow of a long absence; but as a preliminary I went to the Tinten Palast to make inquiries.

The officials were uncertain about the Kaokoveld. They said it was a practically unexplored tract lying below the Kunene river, between the Etosha pan and the sea. The natives were warlike and under the old régime the Germans had not attempted to occupy it for fear of precipitating a war in such inaccessible country. The Union mandatory administration had left the Kaokoveld alone for the same reason. I was told there was not a single European up there; neither settlers, traders nor missionaries, that the territory was wholly unpoliced and that any white man entering there would do so at his peril and on his own responsibility.

All this made me the more determined to go. Fierce and warlike natives as often as not turn out to be decent fellows when properly handled, and I had no qualms on that score.

I travelled back to Capetown and sat through a long and dreary session, but while members droned and debates dragged, I dreamed of a far-off country and I saw elephant like goods trains passing over the hills. I also made practical research and I found that if the Kaokoveld is unknown to the world in general and even



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South Africans have scarcely heard of it, yet it has occasionally been traversed by Europeans. Green and Ericson, two famous hunters, had frequented it in the 'seventies of last century, and the German explorers Volkmann and Hartmann and a few others had been there. In our own time Major Manning and Lieutenant Hahn had made journeys and submitted official reports, deeply pigeonholed and forgotten.

In the course of my inquiry I found too that the Kaokoveld was the scene of a curious episode in our South African history that has gone almost unrecorded.

The great northward trek from the Cape Colony which started in 1835, came to a standstill in the 'fifties, for most of the Voortrekkers had settled down in the Free State and the Transvaal to a less roving life. But the old spirit, the desire to be ever on the move which is so strong a characteristic of the Boers, was still alive and in 1874, for no apparent reason, a large number of them once more inspanned their wagons and trekked off into the western desert with their families and their stock. The migration was the more inexplicable in that they had succeeded in establishing a republic of their own and for the first time were able to enjoy peace and quiet, free from British rule which, like the Irish, they had always declared to be at the root of all their troubles.

They issued a statement that they were leaving the Transvaal because they looked on President Burgers as the anti-Christ; he was a freemason, he had been seen at dances, and he travelled on the Sabbath; but the real propelling power was the old unconquered fever, the wanderlust that had started them on their fateful path so many years before.

About three hundred families shook the dust of the Transvaal republic from their feet and in May 1874 set out on what was practically a continuation of the Great Trek. The survivors and their descendants are still to this day trekking somewhere in the interior of Africa.

After four years of dangers and hardships they had crossed the Kalahari desert and the intervening wastes and what was left of them reached the Kaokoveld in desperate condition. They had lost more than half of their number from thirst and disease, and word of their awful plight ultimately filtered through to the Cape. I unearthed a report in the *Cape Times*, dated 3rd September 1879, which described their sufferings somewhat luridly as follows:



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'On Thursday last the hopeless condition of the migratory Boers who four years ago quitted the Transvaal in order to seek a new Canaan somewhere towards the West coast of this continent was brought to the notice of the House of Assembly. The story was harrowing in its delineation of human endurance, so harrowing that it is surprising to most people that the distress of these unfortunates has not previously been urged upon the government. The Statement made in the House yesterday reads thus: In 1874, three hundred Boers, discontented with the existing régime, and perhaps also impelled by the spirit of emigration, left the Transvaal with their families. Travelling west through the Kalahari, they suffered great privations and died in scores from thirst and fever.

'Only seventy men and three hundred women and children of nearly nine hundred that started are alive. The main body is now halted in a region named the Kaokoveld, close to the Atlantic seaboard, but hundreds, mostly women and children, have succumbed so that the survivors are chiefly widows and orphans. Many have not so much as a dog or a fowl left. They are indeed in a miserable plight.

'Here a child is being carried to its grave; there an old man is dying, yonder five or six of both sexes are given up as past hope; there a mother, or perchance a father, watches the death throes of his children.

'All this makes such a picture of horror as, may God grant, we shall seldom have to witness and still less to be in the midst of.'

As a result of parliamentary action and public subscriptions, a sum was raised and a shipload of food and clothing was sent from Capetown to Walvis Bay in charge of one Richard Haybittle, who succeeded in getting into touch with the remaining trekkers and was able to alleviate their distress to some extent.

Those who were left decided to settle in the Kaokoveld which they found healthy for man and beast, and they built permanent homes and dug irrigation canals; they even erected a church at a place they called 'Rustplaats', imagining that they had found rest at last.

Here they lived for some years, tilling the soil and hunting elephant, but in the end the old spring-fret was upon them once more, and they trekked north through the Kunene into Angola



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and beyond, where they or their children or grandchildren are still trekking about nowadays.

After they had left, the Kaokoveld lapsed back into its primordial state and save for a few explorers who entered at long intervals, it has remained unvisited and undisturbed by white men.

This was the country I intended to see and the moment Parliament rose I made ready to go.



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# VIII

## KAOKOVELD ADVENTURES

### I

Knowing little of the conditions I was to meet, I intended to travel light. I laid in a side of good bacon, a bag of potatoes and onions, a pocket of wheat meal and a store of salt, coffee, tea and sugar.

These plus my rifle and a sleeping bag and some spare clothing formed my equipment. For the rest I was going to live on the land. I took a motor-car, thinking I would at any rate be able to push in some distance with it, after which I proposed to wait upon circumstances.

With the car in a truck behind and my impedimenta in a railway coach I left Capetown for the long journey to Windhoek and from there I went by narrow gauge to a place called Outjo, a small desert outpost from which my journey proper was to begin.

The road from Outjo runs due west roughly parallel to the southern boundary of the Kaokoveld, and for the first hundred miles it bore some resemblance to a highway; so I was able to make slow but steady going as far as Otyitambi, a lonely spot occupied by a German pioneer. By this time I began to doubt the wisdom of having brought a motor-car. I had several rolls of netting wire by means of which I hoped to negotiate the heavier patches of sand by laying the wire in front of the car. It did not work, for the wheels simply chewed up the coils, and when next day I left Otyitambi it took me eight hours to do twenty miles up what is locally termed a *schlucht*, or dry river bed. I came to the conclusion that the petrol era had not yet dawned in these parts.

I was at my wits' end, for I could persuade the car neither forward nor backward and my only alternative seemed to be to return on foot to my German acquaintance at Otyitambi and there make other plans.

As I sat cogitating on the front seat I saw smoke rising about a mile ahead and walked thither to find out what it meant. Fortune



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had unexpectedly smiled on me. Camped by a waterhole I found an old man named van der Merwe who, with his wife and son, were halted here with their sheep and cattle.

This was a lucky encounter without which I would never have succeeded in entering the Kaokoveld. Van der Merwe senior had actually been a member of the Thirstland Trek of 1874. He was a youth of fourteen at the time and he gave me an absorbing account of the trials and dangers they had endured in the Kalahari desert, the 'Great Thirst' (*Groot Dors*) as he called it. He witnessed many terrible sights of men, women, and children dying of thirst and of cattle licking the wagon tyres because they gleamed like water. He had settled in the Kaokoveld with the other survivors and then trekked with them into Angola.

Later on he moved back into the Kaokoveld where for a long time he and his family surreptitiously lived, for the Administration at Windhoek, fearing trouble with the Natives, had forbidden any European to remain. He and his son hunted and raised sheep and cattle and lived an existence that must have been monotonous with adventure. Now the old man had come south as he wished to take up land nearer to civilization and to legalize his position which was in constant jeopardy owing to his unlawful presence in the forbidden land.

I stayed for nearly a week at the waterhole during which I picked up much useful information from him and his son Daniel, a young man of about thirty who likewise knew the Kaokoveld and spoke several of its dialects.

It was clearly impossible to make any further attempt by car and it was clear too that I would find great difficulty in securing guides, for the local natives look on the Kaokoveld with dread. They have heard so many tales about the savagery of the tribes within its borders and the fierce animals and the evil spirits that dwell in the bush that they will not enter what to them is a land of terror. All the way from Outjo I had offered high wages to anyone who would accompany me: but in vain.

Now all my difficulties were solved, for Daniel van der Merwe junior offered to join me, and not only that but his father produced a light cart and a team of donkeys. They had talked the matter over and decided that they could not allow an amateur like me to go off by himself. Of the many flukes I have enjoyed, this was the greatest of all, for without the assistance of the van der Merwes



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I would still have gone in, but I question whether I would ever have returned.

We completed our arrangements. We took back a party of natives and we pushed my car under a tree where I found it unharmed months later. Then we said good-bye to the old couple, and Daniel and I started away. The transition from motor transport to donkey conveyance was abrupt, but I soon got used to it; and by dint of travelling at night to save our animals from the heat of day, we reached the police post of Kamanjab on the afternoon of 1 August 1925. This was our final contact with the world outside, and from here we were headed for the blue.

We rested for two days and I had further inkling as to the value of Daniel as an ally; for he disappeared into the bush on foot on the morning after our arrival and returned after four or five hours bringing with him four trek oxen with gear complete, together with a native piccanin who, he informed me, was coming along as our driver.

The oxen he had cajoled or commandeered from a half-breed in the neighbourhood and the piccanin he had shanghaied. The urchin was being fairly dragged along, so reluctant was he to accompany what he seemed to look on as a forlorn hope, for he shared the fear of the outside natives about the Kaokoveld.

Daniel was reticent as to how he had procured the oxen, and when I asked him about our whining helpmeet he said, 'Oh, I just ordered him to come; they've got to do what I tell them round here.'

This held good throughout our journey. His word was law in the Kaokoveld and his orders were invariably obeyed.

Daniel press-ganged another native to take the now unneeded donkeys back to his father, and at sunset next day we said good-bye to the two policemen, the last white faces we saw until our return. Then we set out.

We travelled most of the night and by dawn were well inside the limits of the Kaokoveld. We outspanned near a rugged kopje where Daniel knew of water under a rock, and we rested for the day.

It was scarcely light when I saw a troop of elephant in a mopani thicket and in all directions grazed herds of gemsbok (oryx), their horns three and four feet long and straight as arrows. They stand as high as a pony and have chocolate-coloured markings. I shoot



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for food only, so I satisfied myself with watching the scene through my glasses, as the sight of big game never palls.

About midday a curious cavalcade rode up consisting of David, the chief of the Toppenaar Hottentots, and a following. This tribe lives at Zesfontein, to the west, which does not lie within the Kaokoveld, but they were taking a short cut through one corner of it on some expedition of their own. They were mounted on riding oxen and most of them carried firearms of sorts.

The Toppenaars were once a powerful and numerous clan, but they are dwindled to a mere handful and to-day they count only forty male adults. I was told that this is due to inbreeding, but my own opinion is that they are dying from a disease called civilization. Like the Red Indians and the Australian black-fellow there is a virus in their blood that is intolerant of the presence of the white man, and in not many years from now they will have gone the way of other extinguished races.

In the late afternoon we went on. The country was flat but the bush was not thick and everywhere stood rugged kopjes. As the next waterhole was at a place called Khairos, a long distance off, we pushed the oxen and save for short rests, continued through the night. We generally avoided travelling by day, but went forward next morning, with intervals to breathe our cattle, until sunset, when we reached water.

Again we passed elephant and I saw a few giraffe, while there were many gemsbok in the long open glades or 'marambas' as they are called.

At Khairos waterhole live two Herero chiefs, Langman and Herman, both wealthy as wealth goes round here, for they possess hundreds of cattle and large flocks of sheep. All through the Kaokoveld the Hereros have become the ruling class, in spite of their small numbers and in spite of the fact that they are interlopers and usurpers who fled hither before the German troops during the Herero war of 1906.

The rightful occupants are the Mahimba, a race of good physique but lacking in the qualities that make for supremacy, and they have allowed a handful of Herero fugitives who came among them less than twenty years ago to drive them from the waterholes and grazing grounds. By a process of high-handed brigandage the Hereros own most of the livestock in the country and the Mahimba are virtually their slaves.



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The Hereros seem to be a race with a strongly-developed instinct for domination. They are big, heavily-built men, inclined to swagger and bluster, but brave and resourceful, and it is not surprising that the Germans found them such a hard nut to crack. They originally inhabited the mountains around and south of Windhoek and I suppose they derive from the Bantu.

When we reached Khairos I had further proof of Daniel's way of doing things, for we had not long been outspanned when both Langman and Herman came to pay their respects to him and a fat sheep was dragged towards us as an offering of goodwill.

Early next morning I had another surprise. A tall Herero reported for duty, clad in a military tunic, riding breeches and putties, and Daniel introduced him as our new cook, Andreas by name, an ex-sergeant of the former German police whom he had conscripted by means best known to himself.

Andreas, unlike his fellow victim, was quite willing to join up for the duration, and he turned out a useful and efficient member of our staff. He spoke German reasonably well, stood smartly to attention and clicked his heels when spoken to, and replied to orders given him with a salute and a 'zum Befehlen' in approved Potsdam style.

I asked Daniel what remuneration our two henchmen would expect, but he said it was bad policy to spoil the Kaokoveld natives by teaching them to require payment for services to a white man. I let it go at that.

On leaving Khairos next day, we followed a faint track which he optimistically called the Road of the Angola Boers. He said it was the route taken by the Thirstland Trekkers when they passed through forty-five years ago. They had no doubt cut a passage for their wagons at the time but it required a better eye than mine to see any trace of it, and we had great difficulty in getting our cart along in the thick bush. We travelled due north to Otjitundua, reaching there in five or six days.

At most of the waterholes we found well-to-do Hereros in command. They owned considerable herds with the usual Mahimba serfs looking after them. At several places the Mahimba complained of lion but we saw none. The country improved as we went. The trees were taller, the grass more plentiful and to elephant and giraffe and oryx were now added herds of zebra and koodoo and springbok.



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At night we halted, as a rule, some distance from the waterholes, for the elephant came out after dark to drink and we watched them as they filed by. The bulls and cows never drink together but on alternate nights. The bulls pad along quietly and taking their fill, they splash and roll in the mud, then they go off as softly as they came, but the cows can be heard approaching from a distance and they objected to our presence, for whenever they scented us, they trumpeted angrily and the calves ran squealing about, between them creating a din that was pretty alarming at first.

However, they never attempted to molest us, and on moonlit nights we were able to see them clearly. When we passed elephant in the daytime they shuffled off, though once or twice a bull faced round, his ears outstretched and his trunk uplifted as if he meant to charge. Daniel and I stood ready with our rifles in case of need, but we never had occasion to fire.

On our way to Otyitundua at several spots there was running water, and at one of them we saw the first relic of the Thirstland Trek; for here, beside a well-trodden elephant path, lay the lonely grave of one of the trekkers, and from now onward we repeatedly came on similar milestones of these indomitable pioneers. The graves are covered with mounds of limestone and they are still in good condition. Daniel even knew the names of those who lay beneath.

At Otyitundua are the ruins of houses they built in 1878 and 1879 and the remains of their cattle kraals and walled gardens as well as the irrigation furrows they cut to lead water to the plains below. It is hard to understand why they left a place such as this where they could have enjoyed peace and plenty under what to them must have been ideal conditions after their wanderings in the desert, but the trek spirit drove them ever onward.

The evening we reached the hill at Otyitundu a troop of elephant coming to drink frightened a herd of cattle belonging to a local Herero and the terrified animals stampeded past our cart with the elephant on their heels; and but for the fact that Daniel had taken the precaution of double-tying our oxen with gemsbok riems to a big tree, they would have gone too, for they got wildly excited and tugged and strained at their bonds. Had they broken loose I doubt if we should ever have seen them again.

The cattle and the elephant streaming by in a cloud of dust amid bellowing and trumpeting was a sight to remember. It seemed to



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me that the elephant were as frightened as the cattle and that when the cattle started running they had become infected too, for they made no attempt to attack the herd. The last we saw of them, oxen and elephant were intermingled, each apparently bent on getting away from some fancied danger in the rear.

We travelled in two days to Ubombo, across picturesque game-covered plains, with quantities of gemsbok, zebra and giraffe, and more elephant. Once I saw several full-grown giraffe, with two calves. One calf was about eight feet high, but the other could not have been more than a few days old. It was so tiny that at first I only made out a head and a pair of ears above the long grass and I took it to be an antelope of some kind. Then they crossed an open glade and I was able to see what it was as it sprawled along, all legs and neck, beside its mother.

At Ubombo we were within the immediate sphere of Oorlog's power. He is the most forceful Herero chief in the Kaokoveld and the farther we went the more we heard of him. Several bands of Mahimba waited on us at Ubombo to complain of his depredations. They said he and his followers took their cattle and wives at will and certainly he has laid a heavy hand on them if all we heard between this and the Kunene river were true.

There were many springbok on the flats below the fountain and Daniel and I shot half a dozen to feed the Mahimba envoys. These buck have bigger horns than I have seen anywhere and some of the specimens would run Rowland Ward's records pretty close.

In addition to antelope there was plenty of guinea fowl, partridge, and pheasant, so we kept our larder well stocked. One morning a large flock of guinea fowl running into several hundred came up a game track in single file. I waited until the front of the line was twenty yards off and then I whistled. The birds looked up and I sliced seven of their heads off with one bullet. It was rank murder but it kept us in poultry for more than a week. We halted at Ubombo for several days then travelled for two days through increasingly thick bush to Gauko-Otawi, the 'Rustplaats' or resting place of the Trekkers. Here it was that in 1878 they had built a church, their trek-fever temporarily stilled; they thought they had at last reached the land of their dreams.

And here was a region that might have satisfied the most restless nomad of them all, for there was running water, and grazing and hunting grounds such as Nimrod himself would have envied. But



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OORLOG
The only picture ever taken of him

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they stayed for only two years—to the Boers Utopia always lies beyond the next horizon—and once more they abandoned the homes they had built and the fields and gardens they had laid out, and went on a trail, the end of which they are yet seeking.

At Gauko-Otawi, with its abundance of water and its wooded hills, the elephant concentrate in greater numbers than anywhere else. At dusk every evening Daniel and I stood inside the ruined church and watched them pass, almost brushing the walls as they crossed the clearing to drink at the pools.

As usual, a Herero refugee, one Thomas, had established his kingdom here. He was a great hectoring bully, standing well over six feet, and he had with him half a dozen compatriots with whose assistance he keeps the local Mahimba in subjection. He had turned the old irrigation furrows of the Boers to good account and he had fields of wheat and vegetables and maize below.

In order to drive away the birds by day and elephant and antelope at night he keeps a small army of Mahimba underlings continually shouting and beating tom-toms.

Our oxen were by now so footsore from the rough country we had come over that we considered it impossible to take them any further, especially as the country ahead was growing increasingly mountainous.

Up to now we had kept to comparatively open country, but to the north lay a sea of tumbled ranges which were negotiable only along narrow elephant paths where no vehicle could hope to go. Even the old Trek-Boers had swerved eastwards from here, but I was determined to see what lay beyond and to visit Oorlog's kraal, for I had heard so much of this old freebooter on the way up that I decided to abandon our cart for the time being and to push on by other means.

To that end we had to enlist the co-operation of Thomas, as even Daniel van der Merwe's knowledge of the Kaokoveld, extensive as it was, stopped short of the tract we were making for.

Thomas was generally half drunk from a beer they brew from honey and he was truculent at first. So Daniel exercised some sort of 'third degree' on him which produced a couple of trained riding oxen; and having ferreted out the information that another Herero chief named Cabrito, living at a fountain twelve miles away, owned two Portuguese ponies he insisted that these animals should be added to our transport.



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After a day or two we set off for Cabrito's, each of us on a pack ox with a square of tanned sheepskin to serve as a saddle and a thong passed through its nose in lieu of a bridle.

We had ordered Thomas and his Herero followers to accompany us. They refused and turned up intoxicated at our camp armed with several Martini Henri rifles. Daniel took it quite calmly. He told them if they did not obey I, who was a big man in the South, would see to it that a police post would be established here in the near future. This thoroughly alarmed Thomas for he knew that once Europeans were stationed at Gauko-Otawi his power would be gone for ever. Daniel sent them back to put away their rifles and next morning we started. We were an ill-assorted crew for Thomas and his men did not relish their forced attendance, while the Mahimba serfs were delighted at their discomfiture and openly capered with glee as we filed off.

After a weary ride, for an ox makes uncomfortable seating, we reached Cabrito's village. He too had been a fugitive from German vengeance and he too had built up a little principality and possessed many cattle and sheep, although he had reached the Kaokoveld empty-handed not many years ago. He had wheatfields and much tobacco for there was running water and the furrows of the Trekkers to lead it to his crops.

Cabrito was a pleasanter fellow than Thomas. On hearing the object of our visit he let us have the horses plus saddles without demur: two well-knit ponies that he had bought from an Angola Boer who had come into the Kaokoveld the year before to poach elephant.

I chose the bigger pony of the two for I was the more heavily built. He had been clawed by a lion and he had not yet recovered his nerves, as I was to find, for though he had good staying powers he shied and plunged at every bush and at every sound, and was an uneasy animal to ride.

We spent two days at Cabrito's kraal looking for a troop of lion which he said had killed many of his cattle; but we did not find them. We saw several black rhino during our search, fierce ungainly beasts whom we left alone because I had no wish to kill them, or to be killed by them.

After this we rode back to Gauko-Otawi to make our preparations. We instructed Andreas and the piccanin to remain in charge of our cart and stores during our absence and after requisitioning



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the services of four Mahimba guides from Thomas, Daniel and I rode off two days later.

By nightfall we reached a village named Owatjana. The natives here were Mahimba, guarding cattle belonging to Thomas, and they said that lion were raiding almost nightly, so for safety's sake we double-thonged our horses and built our fires close to the thorn hedge surrounding the huts. It was as well. Shortly before dark we had prepared and eaten our supper and Daniel and I were lying on our blankets talking to each other. Our guides were squatting a few yards away by their own fire, when suddenly a tawny form leapt almost over our heads and there came the bloodcurdling bellow of an animal in mortal terror. A lion had seized an ox, only five or six yards away from us, and we could see him snarling and savaging his prey. We reached for our weapons, but rifles were useless for he was right up against a hut; from within came the frightened cries of native women and children, so it would have been almost impossible to fire without hitting one of them.

We were nonplussed for a moment, but our Mahimbas showed presence of mind. They grasped burning faggots and Daniel and I followed their example. Then we rushed up and thrust the brands in the lion's face. He gave an angry 'woof' and for a moment it looked as if he was going to claw at us; but then he leaped away and disappeared into the bush.

I doubt whether thirty seconds had elapsed between the time he had sprung upon the ox and the time we chased him off, yet in that brief interval he had killed his victim, snapped its hind leg above the elbow, leaving the bone sticking out, and had broken off one of its horns; which gives some idea of the fierce dynamic energy of these brutes.

From his spoor the next morning it was clear that he had stalked us the previous afternoon for nearly five miles as we rode along; so it was just as well for us that at the last moment he preferred to take an ox instead of one of us.

From Owatjana we continued our journey, and now we entered the wildest country I have seen in Africa, with rugged mountains following upon each other in apparently endless succession. Through these we laboriously threaded our way, mostly by elephant paths, for they have an eye for gradient as good as that of a railway engineer.

Our progress was slow, but we made steady northing through



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a region that has probably never been visited by Europeans. We rode on for five or six days, barricading ourselves with thorn skerms at night as if against an enemy, but though we heard lion roaring we had no further trouble from them.

In these parts the natives had never seen white men and they flocked in to inspect their unusual visitors. Under Daniel's knowledgeable treatment I found the Mahimbas to be good-natured, intelligent children. The young men are slender and graceful, but after their thirties they quickly shrivel into old age.

Their staple food is a concoction named *omeira*, made from fermented milk, and they provided us with a calabash of it at every village we passed. It is a palatable nourishing dish which we enjoyed drinking.

The Mahimbas have no faith in the cleansing properties of water. Daniel said they never wash, but in lieu thereof they rub their bodies with fat. Each man wears around his neck a segment of sheep intestine filled with grease which exudes a gentle trickle over all his body as he gets heated; and by this system of automatic lubrication they keep themselves satisfactorily oiled.

I gathered that they are blissfully unconscious that they had once been citizens of the German Empire, and they are equally unaware that they are now nationals of the Union of South Africa. The only authority they know is Oorlog's and they stand in great awe of him. They had a lot to say about his drastic methods, but they seemed to accept the law of the strongest with resignation.

Money is meaningless to them. A Mahimba will run fifty miles on an errand if promised a few inches of tobacco twist where he won't go half a mile on a cash basis.

A young Mahimba lad accompanied us for nearly a week to get a baking-powder tin which Andreas had promised to give him as soon as it was empty; but when I presented him with a coin he spent several days drilling a hole into it with a nail and then he hung it round his neck by way of ornament.

In this manner, travelling slowly through jagged country we reached Gangisema, Oorlog's headquarters, towards the end of September.

## II

Oorlog knew of our coming long before we rode into his stad,



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his scouts having watched our movements ever since we had left Gauko-Otawi, so he told us later.

He is still a fine figure of a man, tall and straight, though he must be nearing eighty. Strictly speaking he is not a Herero at all as his father was the one-time well-known 'Bechuana Tom' who acted as gunbearer to Green the famous elephant hunter. His mother, however, was a Herero and he looks on himself as one.

On our arrival Oorlog and about thirty followers, mostly his sons, were awaiting us. They were clad in European clothes, for the Herero makes a point of dressing like the white man as a mark of his superior status over the skin-clad tribes. He spares no pains to acquire suitable garb, whether by smuggling from Angola or by going nearly three hundred miles east to the missionaries in Ovamboland to make his purchases.

Oorlog's seat of government consisted of a collection of grass huts though he had a wattle and daub house himself, with glassless windows and a pitched roof. Close by was a hot spring and after having palavered for a while we offsaddled our horses under a tree near the water.

We remained here for ten days. I rode out occasionally for koodoo, which was the only game I could find in the vicinity. Oorlog and his men continuously importuned us for meat and though many of them had rifles they were short of ammunition and preferred to let me do the hunting. I did not much like the killing of these beautiful animals but in view of our situation Daniel thought it politic to fall in with Oorlog's demands.

For the rest, I spent an interesting time, studying old Oorlog and extracting from him something of his past history. It appeared that as a boy he had accompanied Green on elephant hunts in the interior. Then he joined the Thirstland Trekkers, as a guide, through the Kalahari and he too had witnessed the dreadful sights of that disastrous period and he had gone to Angola with the survivors. He served in several native campaigns and the Portuguese, recognizing his courage and ability (so said Oorlog) gave him the chieftainship over two fighting tribes.

In command of these he was engaged for many years in various wars. He gained a great reputation but little else, he said, for in the end most of his warriors were killed and he fell into disfavour. His version was that in fighting against the Konyama tribe he was seriously wounded (he showed me the scars) and on his return,



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before his hurts were mended, he was ordered to march the remnant of his force to Mossamedes, there to be shipped up the coast on yet another campaign at Loando.

He says he refused to obey, whereupon the Portuguese put a price on his head and he escaped south into the Kaokoveld.

There is, however, another side to the story, for when I was in Angola during the following year the Portuguese told me that while it was quite true they were going to ship him up the coast, it was not to a war in Loanda, but to the Island of St. Thomas where they proposed imprisoning him for life on account of the robberies and murders he had committed. Be that as it may, Oorlog is a picturesque old scoundrel and although he fled from Angola as recently as 1917 he has established himself as paramount chief of all this region. He has gathered around him a band of Hereros who pay him unswerving loyalty. Even Thomas at Gauko-Otawi and Langman and Herman as far south as Khairos accept him as their overlord, and they stand in fear of him.

He told me he has taken a wife from every tribe within reach on both sides of the Kunene. He said women are always jealous of each other and whenever a plot is hatched against him, he is sure to hear of it from one or other of them.

He told me he has about fifty sons alive plus fifty or sixty sons he does not know of and he thinks at least thirty more must have died. I asked him how many daughters he had and he scornfully said that no one ever bothered to count daughters.

Having spent much of his time with the Angola Boers, he speaks Dutch fluently as do several of his sons whom for this reason he refers to with pride as '*oorlams volk*', meaning 'enlightened people'.

Gangisema lies about six days' ride from Zwartbooi Drift, the nearest fordable point on the Kunene, but Daniel fished out that there was a direct path down the Mahango gorge which would take us there in two days. I chose this route as I wished to see the river of which I had heard and read.

Oorlog tried to dissuade us for he said no white man had ever been down the gorge and the going was terrible. We suspected that the wily old fox wanted to keep the path a secret as a backdoor into Angola and we insisted on attempting it. Oorlog with a shrug of his shoulders instructed four of his sons to take us through.

We started at daybreak one morning and after a long ride we



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began to enter the gorge, a mighty chasm by which the Mahango river has slashed its way to the Kunene.

We owed Oorlog an apology. I have never encountered a worse passage for man or beast, not even in the Boer War. For eight hours we toiled, leading our horses now on one side of the precipitous mountain wall, now on the other, along a boulder-strewn track that wellnigh broke our hearts. At length, towards sunset, we emerged from the lower end of the canyon where it abruptly debouches on to the foothills that run down to the Kunene river thirty miles away. On reaching the exit, we continued until we reached a Mahimba village after dark and camped there for the night. The natives were excited, for an hour or two before three lion had leaped among their stock in broad daylight, killing six oxen and five sheep among the reeds close to their huts.

Next morning they came to say that the lion were still there so Daniel and I took our rifles and went to see. We found the place a shambles but the lion had decamped into the jungle on hearing us approach and short of their coming to look for us there was little hope of our coming on them. One old bull must have died gamely. On his horns were bloodstained tufts of hair and from the trampled ground it was clear he had put up a spirited fight.

We stayed over that day and next morning as we were riding along we came on a party of Mahimba on the move with their families and cattle. They told us they had burned their kraal and were seeking safer quarters, for lion had broken into one of their huts the night before and had carried off three women and a babe in arms.

Daniel, who was a bit of a wag as well as guide, philosopher, and friend, said the lion served the same purpose in the Kaokoveld as doctors do in more civilized areas by thinning out the population. That night we camped far out on the plain and a lion and lioness and two cubs prowled round and round us as we saw by the spoor next morning.

Leaving the Mahango riverbed to the left we rode on and after a difficult trek through rough hills we reached the Kunene river by midday at a spot which I believe has never before been viewed by a white man.

We passed numbers of zebra and koodoo and once, when I had gone ahead of the others and was waiting on the edge of a ravine for them to come up, about forty zebra and ten or twelve koodoo



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walked below me. There were several foals and calves nuzzling in against their mothers and they were so near that I could easily have dropped a pebble on their backs.

We struck the Kunene at a point where the stream divided into a number of separate channels with wooded islands in between, some of them very large and on the far bank stretched Angola to the north. The scenery was magnificent. Giant trees, tall palms and thick tropical vegetation, combined with the flowing waters studded with crocodile, was like a picture from the story books of one's youth.

We made our camp under a huge Anna tree that looked like a drawing by Gustave Doré. Curiously enough there was no sign of elephant. One would have thought that the river belt with its unlimited waters and its luxurious growth would attract them, but the South African elephant, like most of our other big game, prefer the more arid parts and as long as they have a muddy pool to drink at and to wallow in they appear to be satisfied.

On the first evening of our stay I learned something new about lion. Up to now we had taken every precaution, building zarebas at night and carefully tying up the horses close to the fire. But now at sunset, when I suggested to Daniel that we should fetch in our steeds, I was surprised to hear him say we could leave them out till morning. When I protested he replied, 'Look at the ground at your feet and you will see.' I looked but saw nothing to justify our leaving the ponies to their fate.

Then he showed me that the river bank was covered with a species of small thorn, spiked on all sides like a medieval mace, and he said a lion had too much respect for his paws to venture into an area carpeted with them. And so it proved, for although we left the horses out every night we had no trouble on this score.

We camped by the river for more than a week. It was possible, by looking for narrow channels, to get from island to island, and we spent most of our time exploring. We had perforce travelled light and as our supplies consisted only of tea, sugar, salt and a little Boer-meal, we had to supplement our larder by hunting.

One evening I had a narrow escape. I had waded through to a large island where, after a long stalk, I shot a koodoo bull. By the time I had finished skinning and cutting him up into portions for fetching next morning, it was nearing dark so I covered the meat with branches and decided to return to the mainland through a



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channel of the river close by instead of fighting my way back through more than a mile of thick reeds to the shallow spot where I had forded the stream earlier in the afternoon.

The water was about fifteen yards wide and although I saw a crocodile floating a hundred yards upstream, only his eyes and snout showing, I risked a crossing.

Holding my rifle, camera and boots above my head I went in. When I was half-way over I was chest deep and looking towards where I had seen the crocodile I was startled to see that he had submerged and that an ominous forked ripple was rapidly moving towards me.

I hurled my boots into the reeds on the far bank, took the camera by its sling and catapulted it after the boots and retaining my rifle in hand I made a wild dash for the other side, dragging myself up in the nick of time; for as I scrambled clear the crocodile broke surface immediately below with a vicious snap of his jaws.

It was foolish to have chanced it for I knew from what I had seen in Madagascar and East Africa that crocodiles are clumsy brutes on land but in their own element they flash by like an arrow. It took me a long time to find my boots and camera and as I trudged back to camp in the dark I swore I would never again take risks of this kind.

This was my second escape. Many years ago I had an unpleasant experience with a crocodile in Madagascar and to spare them seems to me to be misplaced mercy.

Next morning we brought in the koodoo meat and I presented Oorlog's sons with the skin which they greatly prize for the making of sandals. We dallied in this lotus land and I clambered about the islands, and I shot every crocodile I could see for I loathe these brutes.

At last we had to bid this great river farewell and reluctantly we started south. Our unshod horses had not yet recovered from the effects of their passage down the Mahango gorge and both were lame. So Daniel and I walked every inch of the way back to Oorlog's capital leading them behind us. It took us four days, and after we reached Gangisema we rested for about a fortnight to give the ponies time to recuperate.

Then we said good-bye to Oorlog and his men-at-arms and we rode the way we had come.

In the course of nine or ten days we worked back to the com-



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parative civilization of our cart at Gauko-Otawi, living on game all the time. In the long run this palls as a staple article of diet.

We found on arriving that Andreas had taken the oxen to a place called Ombaka, three days distant, for better grazing, so we had to send a Mahimba runner to recall him. This caused a delay of over a week which I spent in hunting an occasional gemsbok to placate Thomas and his men.

As our boots were finished and Thomas, now in a more chastened mood, offered to make us each a pair of sandals if I got him a zebra, I executed one of these unoffending animals and he implemented his promise by turning out two serviceable pairs of dazzle-painted footgear.

In going out to hunt I frequently saw elephant and occasionally black rhino. One morning I watched a bull elephant through my glasses. He was rubbing the under part of his neck against one of those tall antheaps that stand over ten feet high. He was enjoying himself, for he kept twisting and turning his head to get the maximum amount of scratching surface.

Suddenly the antheap snapped at its base and toppled over in a cloud of dust. The bull nearly sat down on his haunches with fright and then, apparently realizing what had happened, stood for quite a while swaying on one foreleg and then the other as if laughing at the joke against himself.

During much of the time I spent in the Kaokoveld we were pestered by a species of small black midge. They hover round in swarms and have an irritating way of settling on one's eyelids. Daniel says they are always to be found where there are elephant and they make for the eyes to seek moisture.

They were as big a nuisance to the elephant as they were to us for once, as I stood behind a tree looking at an elephant in a glade, I could see by the way he was impatiently flapping his ears and swinging his trunk that the gad-flies were troubling him.

But he knew how to deal with them for presently he walked forward to where there was a patch of loose soil and lowering the tip of his trunk to the ground he drew in a quantity of sand. Then he took aim and squirted the charge into the swarm. It was like firing a No. 6 shot cartridge at a flock of finches and he made short work of his tormentors.

When I told Daniel this he said he had seen them do the same thing by spraying water at them.



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Whilst waiting for the oxen at Gauko-Otavi I witnessed another surprising occurrence. Thomas and Cabrito were preparing to set out to visit Mahonna Katiti, a neighbouring Herero chief who lived somewhere east of this. Before starting, a sheep was killed and the entrails were carefully decanted on to the outstretched skin. Then Thomas and Cabrito and their followers squatted solemnly around and they pointed with sticks and assegais and rifle butts and discussed the convolutions of the intestines as carefully as ever did the Roman augurs. After a long debate they decided that the omens were unfavourable and postponed their departure to a more hopeful occasion.

At length Andreas and the piccanin arrived with the oxen and we started on the home trail. We jolted along with our cart, day after day, much as on the upward journey and once more we camped at waterholes or, when the weather was hot, trekked at night, the dark forms of elephant sometimes noiselessly moving by.

These final stages were without undue incident save that by now our clothes were in ribbons and our original supplies were long since exhausted, so we existed solely on game without bread, tea, coffee or sugar to vary the monotony. Towards sunset one evening we pulled up at the police station at Kamanjab in our zebra-skinned sandals, looking like scarecrows, so the two policemen said.

We now travelled to where Daniel's parents were still camped by the waterhole. I sent back the oxen in charge of Andreas and the piccanin with adequate gratuities to their original owner and I retrieved my car where I had left it under a tree long before. It was unharmed and the engine started up without difficulty, so I said good-bye to those who had befriended me so well and went by easy stages, encountering heavy going at times on account of the sand and the rough country. When I reached the railhead my car was a wreck. I sold it to a local trader for a song, and if I had failed to see elephant like goods trains coming over the hills, I had at any rate carried out my resolve to make close acquaintance with the Kaokoveld and its people.

I journeyed home by rail to Johannesburg. My family met me at the station. My small boy John, aged five, hugged me and said, 'Daddy, all the time you was gone I *thinked* of you a little bit every day.' Surely as warm a welcome as any man could wish for.



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# IX

## RANCH INSPECTION IN SOUTHERN RHODESIA

### I

I had not been back for more than a fortnight when I was off again. Sir Abe Bailey, our multi-millionaire mine owner, commissioned me to report on his land holdings in Southern Rhodesia.

The fee was a goodly one, with everything found, so for a month or two I roamed about that country. I visited Matabeleland and Mashonaland and I did some shooting for the pot, but we had been sumptuously fitted out and I wanted for little. I made beyond Gatooma through a wild area teeming with eland, sable, and other game and I reached as far east as the Lou Block beyond the Lundi river.

South, I inspected Sir Abe's ranches in the Matoppos and to the north I got to Sinoia and the Mazoë, with an occasional return to Salisbury or Bulawayo to replenish my stores.

Compared with my Kaokoveld expedition it was a luxury trip. It was interesting, but the parts I visited are known, and I ran an uneventful course, though once while I was on the Ngesi river one of Sir Abe's men was seized with a serious ophthalmic complaint. He went blind and was in great agony. I tore him all through the night to Bulawayo and the doctors afterwards said that if he had been brought in a few hours later he would have permanently lost his eyesight.

At the Lundi I shot a good many crocodiles on the sandbanks. I dislike unnecessary killing of animals, but as I have already mentioned, I do not believe in showing these brutes any mercy.

After completing my work I drew up a report which I sent to Sir Abe with account annexed and received a gratifying cheque by return of post. I was now in funds and I went north by rail to Elizabethville in the Belgian Congo, intending to have a look at the place before returning to the Union. I spent a fortnight there, and



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then I met a Portuguese, Senhor Cabral, who told me he was going to the west coast of Angola by car.

He was an official of Robert Williams & Co., the British firm that was building a railway from Lobito Bay to Elizabethville. The Company had sent a Ford car and a lorry through Angola and the intervening Congo forests some weeks ago as an experiment and he said he proposed doing the return journey to the coast with these two vehicles. He offered to take me along and though we were warned on all sides that the rainy season was on hand and that we were fools to attempt a passage at this time of year I thought the opportunity too good to be missed and agreed to accompany him. The Ford was a museum piece and the lorry was not in much better shape, but we started off for a place called Chilongo on the main line north of Elizabethville from where we intended jumping off into the interior.

At Chilongo, Cabral went down with fever and we were held up for several days.

There was a sort of roadhouse here, run by a Monsieur Forthomme and his wife and pending Cabral's recovery we stayed here.

All over the Belgian Congo there were large notices posted up forbidding Europeans under heavy penalties from striking or otherwise laying hands upon a native. At Chilongo I had personal experience as to how this veto operated.

During my first night at the inn my valise was rifled and all the money I had with me, some eighty pounds in Bank of England notes, was stolen. This was a serious blow for it left me penniless and I immediately reported my loss to Forthomme. He was upset for he told me that other thefts had taken place of late and they reflected on his hostelry so he asked me to leave the matter in his hands.

I found next morning that he had done useful work during the night. His native servants lived in a compound at the back and he had wormed his way behind their huts to listen-in and he heard what he wanted to know. In one of the huts a group of natives were squatting round a fire and one of them was telling the rest that he and a companion had taken a number of bank notes from the stranger's bag. At first they thought it was merely the usual small denomination Belgian paper money, a fistful of which might be worth ten shillings, but on closer examination they found themselves possessed of what seemed to them a small fortune.



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They were sophisticated enough to know the value of British notes and they said they had buried the money and were making for Elizabethville next day to obtain the Belgian equivalent at one of the banks.

Forthomme, having learned this, crept away and at about nine o'clock the following morning I saw him drag two natives into his office. He had previously interrogated them and they had denied all knowledge of the theft. Now he was taking sterner measures. For nearly an hour I heard the sound of lashes descending, followed by groans, and at last the two natives were carried out. They were unconscious and their backs were a mass of weals and blood. They were laid face down in the yard and Madame Forthomme called for a dish of warm water with which she bathed their wounds.

Presently they came to and there was Forthomme standing over them again with his sjambok as if to lay on once more. The two wretches had endured the previous flogging, determined not to disclose where they had hidden their wealth, but now their courage broke and they sullenly muttered a few words; whereupon Forthomme walked to the ashpit behind the kitchen and there, after some digging, he unearthed my money in a tin. When I asked him whether he was not afraid of breaking the law by flogging natives he said he *was* the law round here.

He and his wife and I nursed Cabral until he was better and though he was still weak and shaky we now set off. I drove the car and a Portuguese half-breed named Antonio drove the lorry. We also had two other natives who had come up with it from the coast.

We started in pouring rain which hardly ever ceased throughout our journey. Both car and lorry were heavily laden. Cabral had executed so many commissions at Elizabethville for friends on the railway construction staff that the back of the car was piled to the roof with articles of every description, while the lorry carried eight hundred kilos of piping together with our kit and still more parcels, chiefly whisky for the New Year, and drums of petrol.

Our road ran due west. It was a mere track through the forest and it was often two to four inches under water. The soil however was sandy, giving the tyres a firm grip, and the smaller streams were bridged with log structures that enabled us to cross without difficulty.



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On the first day out, some thirty or forty kilometres from Chilongo we reached the Congo river which we navigated by means of a pontoon built of logs laid across dugout canoes. As far as Bukama the river is called the Lualaba, and after this it takes the better-known name. The country beyond the river is a high plateau, 5,000 feet above sea level, for the most part covered with forest in which considerable rivers rise at intervals.

After crossing the Congo we had to pass three more rivers and many smaller streams before dark and we camped for the night on the bank of one of them, having done about ninety miles that day; and this was good going in view of the rain that continued to pour on us and the delays in working the pontoons.

Next morning Cabral had fever again, as well as the two natives on the lorry, so I continued to drive the Ford with my patient pretty ill on the seat beside me. The road grew more difficult as there was mud in place of sand and repeatedly I had to walk considerable distances into the bush to collect natives from the villages to haul us out.

This involved unloading and reloading the cars to lighten them and as it rained torrentially all the while, I began to see that motoring in the Congo in the wet season was a diluted pleasure.

I came to Kayoyo towards evening with Cabral running a high temperature and with no sign of the lorry. The place is a Belgian military station on a biggish river draining towards the Congo basin.

The Administrator of the district lived here together with subordinate officials and a contingent of Askari. They hospitably received Cabral and after seeing him installed in comfortable quarters I drove back in inky darkness and heavy rains to find the missing lorry.

After nearly two hours I came on it standing in a quagmire with Antonio disconsolately shivering on the front seat and the two sick natives moaning under the tarpaulin. They had decided they could go no further, but I forced Antonio to start up the engine and made him go on ahead of me.

Before long, what with the blackness of the night and the downpour of the waters he overturned down a bank so I left him to spend the night as best he could to guard against looting and took the natives with me to Kayoyo for treatment, getting there long after midnight, drenched and weary.



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In the morning Cabral, ill as he was, took a band of prisoners from the lock-up to assist in righting the lorry which we managed after a long struggle. It was undamaged and able to proceed under its own power. We spent that night and the next day at Kayoyo to give the invalids a breather and the day after that we proceeded once more, reaching Setenga by dusk, the last Belgian post before the Angola border.

Still the rain continued, and the officer in charge told me it had so far been the wettest summer in thirty-one years. I could well believe it for it transcended anything I had ever experienced.

Tsetse fly were plentiful in the forest. They were so numerous that I saw them sticking to the radiators and at halts others would settle on the bonnet, evidently in search of warmth, for the days were chilly on account of the damp. I saw no vestige of game in these parts and yet many people hold that the tsetse cannot live without game to feed upon.

My own belief is that the fly feeds on animals when available, but that blood is not essential to its existence, so that its life cycle depends on some vegetable matter.

We passed a small native village called Dilolo. I had a copy of David Livingstone's book with me and I should say that this was the very spot he mentions where he halted on his way to the Kasai river in 1852.

At Setenga we were allotted a rest house and were able to fill up with petrol from a dump established here by Robert Williams & Co. Cabral and the natives were shown every attention by M. Istaz, the officer in charge.

## II

We rested here a day and the following morning we crossed into Angola (Portuguese West Africa). We found ourselves on the great divide or watershed which runs like a vertebral column athwart the country.

The rivers appeared to drain impartially due north into the Congo basin or due south into the Kunene and Zambezi catchment areas. One moment we would pass a stream that in the end disembogues into the Atlantic, and a mile or two further on we met with another heading for the Indian Ocean on the far side of the African continent.



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The watershed is not mountainous in appearance. It seemed to be a wide open plain covered with tall grass and at the time I crossed, it stood mostly under several inches of water.

Soon after we passed into Angola we struck the headwaters of the Zambezi, a mere brook as yet, and not far away we fell in with the head of the Luashi river, likewise only a trickle, but soon to become a mighty torrent running west and north to the Atlantic.

Beyond the Luashi lay more great open plains. The heavens were still coming down upon us, the rain had scarcely stoppped for a few minutes since we had left Chilongo, and we toiled mile after mile through flooded country. Whenever the contours left dry spaces there was plenty of big game, but I saw no tsetse. There were roan antelope, sable and what I took to be lechwe, also thousands of oribi.

Once, a herd of roan raced us for about two miles. They kept parallel to and just ahead of us, too frightened and too stupid to swerve away and at last they were so winded with splashing through the mud that they halted and I was able to walk up to within a few yards of the puffing, heaving animals. They faced me nervously, switching their tails and snorting, but they did not move away and I walked round to have a good look at the splendid creatures. After the eland, they are the largest antelope in Africa, with serrated horns curving back, but they are not so graceful as the sable.

In spite of the waters covering much of the ground, the going was not as bad as it might have been, for the plains were flat and sandy; terrain which, if anything, is rather improved by wet weather.

Our first day's run into Angola took us as far as a place called Mashiwa, a miserable native stad perched on a rise, and here we spent the night, my patients in a bad way.

Antonio had been stricken with malaria that morning and Cabral, ill as he was, had driven the lorry while I managed the other car. As a result he was so weak next morning that he could not stand on his legs; I had to carry him to his seat and I ordered Antonio back to the wheel of the lorry. I made him go on in advance to make sure of not having to return for him as I had had to do at Kayoyo. Whether in retaliation or whether he was half delirious he backed the lorry into the car and one of the metal pipe lengths pierced my radiator.

I repaired the damage with a compound of manioc with which



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I plastered the hole, but for the rest of the journey until we got to railhead I had to stop on an average of every twenty minutes to plug the radiator with more manioc porridge, a supply of which I carried beside me in a bucket.

We got along after a fashion though at times I feared Cabral would die on my hands. He was a splendid fellow. In the Congo territory he was known as *le petit Portugais*, for he stood over six feet. He was so ill that at every stoppage to mend the radiator, I had to lift him out to permit of his lying down for a few minutes on such dry surface as I could find; but he never complained, and every now and then he wanted to take the wheel to ease my labours. We conversed in French, and when he felt well enough he recited French poetry and declaimed from Racine and Molière.

We now entered a sparsely populated region and it was lucky that the cars behaved, for had we suffered a breakdown or got mudbound there were no natives to help us out and we might have been marooned for weeks. In spite of fever among the crew and my troubles with the radiator, I enjoyed this part of the journey. Game abounded wherever it was dry, and picturesque islands of timber dotted the plains. The vast herds of antelope gave one some idea of what the Transvaal and Free State highveld must have been like when first the old pioneers gazed upon it, and it was such a hunter's paradise as I had dreamed of as a boy even though I no longer wished to hunt.

On this day I nearly ran down a roan bull. He was asleep in the grass beside the track when the roar of our engines woke him. He leaped up and crossed behind the lorry but in front of the Ford, and I missed him by inches as he cleared the mudguards.

It rained all the time; it had been raining ever since we had left Tshilongo and we had begun to look on it as a normal condition, but our clothes were beginning to rot and our boots were green with mould.

One evening Cabral was so ill that I ordered Antonio to drop behind and I raced all out to reach the next Portuguese military station. I got in after dark, the radiator spouting at every pore and the casing red-hot. The two Portuguese officers stationed here did all they could and they treated me with great hospitality.

This post stands on the upper waters of the Kasai, but I was too worried to remember the name. The Kasai ran only a small stream though further north it becomes one of the largest rivers in Africa



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and at Chikapa it becomes navigable into the Congo, so I was told.

Onward next day, everyone in better condition thanks to the kindness of our hosts. It still rained and we still crossed wide flats with plenty of wild animals. We reached the Luachi river that night, a wide stream that runs into the Luena which in turn empties into the Zambesi, and thus into the Indian Ocean; whereas during the day's run we had crossed the Kasai and the Lucano, both of which flow into the Congo and thus into the Atlantic.

Cabral was very ill that night, but next morning he insisted on our proceeding. We touched at a military post on the Luachi and then, some miles beyond, the lorry sat down on its haunches with a broken rear axle. It took us all day in drenching rain to fit a spare that luckily was on board. Cabral, weak and shivering as he was, worked like a Trojan and towards evening we had repaired the damage. We spent a miserable night beside our vehicles and at daybreak we were able to continue.

We were moving from the plains and getting into unflooded timber country, and though the rains still continued, the run-off was greater and the surface was mostly free of standing water. The few natives we met told us there were lion but we saw none, though other game was in evidence.

We spent another hard day, having to unload both car and lorry on three different occasions to climb out of sticky mud patches, but that night we were almost back to civilization for we made a small village called Moxico that boasted of about ten Portuguese traders and several officials, including the Governor of the Province who lived in a residence on a hill.

In the morning we took the road again, through alternate forests and swamps. The never-ending rain caused us the usual troubles out of which we were helped by natives. It was a trying day but my patients were on the mend, and despite the mud and the damaged radiator which still needed constant plugging, we reached a place called Munyango that night and came on the advance guard of the Lobito railway construction in the shape of three members of Robert Williams & Co., who were doing survey work. The actual railhead was at the Cuanza river eighty or ninety miles away and the engineers said they reckoned that the line would be completed as far as the Belgian frontier by the end of 1927.



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We spent the night at Munyango and the following morning we went on, the rain coming down as always.

Just before entering the notorious Cuanza swamp I met with a party of Boers moving through the forest with their wagons and cattle. It was like coming on a continuation of the Great Trek. There were actually a few survivors among them of the original Thirstland episode, gnarled old men and women sitting under the tented hoods. The others were a younger generation, but still fevered with the eternal unrest that is the heritage of the Afrikaner people.

There were about seventy all told. They had come up from Humpata de Janiero down south and said they were on their way to the Congo because they were dissatisfied with Portuguese rule. Yet to my mind the driving impulse was the same 'spring-fret' that had started them from the Transvaal more than forty years ago and had kept them on the move ever since.

There appear to be about three thousand Trek Boers in Angola and when I asked what the others intended to do I was told that all of them would probably migrate into Belgian territory.

I asked them for concrete charges against the Portuguese and I thought their complaints lacked substance. They said they were not allowed to use the motor roads with their wagons, but this prohibition applies to every citizen of Angola; and as the roads were built for cars and their heavy wagons played havoc with the surface in wet weather, I sided with the Portuguese.

Then they objected that each man was allowed only twenty-five rifle cartridges per annum. This certainly pressed hard on them, but knowing the destructive qualities of my people with regard to killing game, and being a game protectionist myself, I was unable to sympathize.

These two matters constituted their main indictment and I must say that taking it all in all the Portuguese have been surprisingly patient with them. It must be remembered that the Trek Boers in Angola have consistently refused to accept Portuguese nationality and even those born there continue to look upon themselves as South African subjects. I wondered what we would have said if the case had been reversed; if for the past forty years several thousand Portuguese had been roving about our country shooting our game and refusing our citizenship.

Nonetheless one cannot but admire the unconquerable spirit of



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these nomads who have roamed the wilds of Africa for longer than did the Israelites in the desert, yet retaining their language and racial proclivities intact.

After spending several hours with them we toiled till dark through the mud and water of the Cuanza flats, pushed on occasion by a crowd of natives from the villages around who had been specially ordered by the local Administrator to help cars across the swampy sections; for with the railway construction close at hand there was a good deal of traffic.

The Cuanza is a wide river flowing north-west towards St. Paul de Loanda. It teems with crocodile and it is said to be navigable lower down. I met a young Boer named Zeedyk crossing in a canoe to return to his wagons on the far bank. His parents had died of fever and he had not a relation in the world. He possessed three wagons and several teams of oxen, inherited from his father, and he was making for the Kasai in the Belgian Congo. He was alone save for his native drivers and though he knew of the other trekkers ahead he preferred being by himself. So this self-reliant youngster was moving into the void on his own.

The railway had reached the Cuanza and construction trains were already crossing by a temporary wooden bridge. There was a steel pontoon upon which our car and lorry were ferried over, a change from the dugout makeshifts we had used up to now, and on landing on the opposite side we found ourselves on a good hard road at last. For the first time since leaving Chilongo, eight hundred miles behind us, we were able to whizz along at something like a fair speed and it brought us by sundown to Gamacupa, a tidy little European camp that had sprung up as a result of the railway.

The members of the staff and their families were housed here and they received us with open arms for we were the bearers of gifts. All those parcels and packages and whisky we had brought from Elizabethville were consigned to recipients at Gamacupa. There were rubber balls and dolls and other presents for the children and it was good to see them unfolding the wrappings with laughter and cries of joy.

This was the end of our motor journey and Cabral and I thankfully handed in the two battered hulks to the storeman. The trip would not rank as a feat in dry weather but in the rains it had been a pretty difficult undertaking.



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After a few days' halt to make sure that Cabral was on the mend I said good-bye to him and to Antonio and the natives and boarded the Benguella train for the coast. I never saw Cabral again. He was a very good fellow.

I travelled down through picturesque hill-country to Benguela, and from there to Lobito Bay. The bay is formed by a curious spit of sand a mile and a half long running out to sea like a breakwater. I was told by an engineer who was at work at a jetty on the foreshore that there is nothing quite like this arm of sand anywhere in the world. It never grows greater or less and though it is composed of loose sand, not the stormiest weather adds to or subtracts from its shape. It slopes into the water so steeply that in bathing I used to take running dives as from a springboard without fear of hitting bottom.

The British Consul kindly put me up during the four or five days I remained at Lobito. He told me that he was continually in difficulties about the Angola Boers. They were not Portuguese subjects and as they or their parents had left the Transvaal in 1875 they are not Union Nationals, so the Portuguese administration look on them as British subjects. The Portuguese say that the trekkers originally came from the Transvaal and as the Transvaal was annexed in 1902 they are considered to be British. Accordingly whenever an Angola Boer gets into trouble his case is remitted to the British Consul for disposal.

The Portuguese currency is of low value and he told me that a local bank having to receive a sum equal to about £1,200 sterling found three ox-wagons drawn up before the door carrying seven tons of coinage all of which had to be brought in and counted by the unfortunate tellers.

In less than a week I was lucky enough to catch a southbound ship. On the way down the coast we stopped for two days at Mossamedes and during the halt I met the Administrator who gave me the Portuguese version of Oorlog's activities in Angola, which I have already touched on. He said Oorlog was a brave and resourceful man but a constant breaker of the peace whose depredations were such that in the end it was decided to imprison him for life; and had he not escaped into the Kaokoveld, he would have spent the rest of his existence in captivity.

There were several Portuguese officials on board on their way to new appointments at Delagoa Bay and other Portuguese centres.



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From what I could gather there was a kind of 'Washington Post' continually going on. Owing to the speed with which Cabinets in Lisbon rose and fell, governors and administrators chased each other round the coast of Africa all the time, for as soon as one of them reached his destination a fresh incumbent sent out by a more recent Cabinet was already on the water to supersede him.

The voyage to Cape Town was pleasant but without incident, and by January 1926 I was home once more.



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# X

# THE QUEST OF THE BONTEBOK

## I

During the next year or two I kept no consecutive record but jotted down such events as I thought to be of interest.

My notebook says that during the first few months of 1926 I attended Parliament at Capetown and that our Nationalist opponents accused us of being imperialists and traitors to the True Cause and we charged them with racialism and with exploiting Afrikaans sentiment for vote-catching purposes.

This sort of thing has gone on since 1912 and will no doubt continue for another generation or two until we realize the futility of it all.

In spite of our wrangles I was on terms of personal friendship with some of our enemies, chief of whom was my successor, the new Minister of Lands, Mr. Piet Grobler. He was a relative of the late Paul Kruger and he was a gentleman of the old school, liked by everyone regardless of party cleavages.

I lost no opportunity of attacking his government and his party, but in spite of this he asked me one morning to undertake an investigation into the question of the 'bontebok', a rare antelope that was almost extinct.

Mr. Grobler was interested in the protection of wild life in South Africa, and on the strength of my previous efforts in the Sabi country he wished me to look into the matter. I gladly accepted the task. I was furnished with a car and a couple of officials, so leaving Parliament to its talking we set out at once.

The bontebok (*Damaliscus Pygargus*) are large, white-faced, white-bellied antelopes with chocolate-coloured backs and flanks and they carry lyre-shaped horns. In former years they roamed the coastal belt of the Cape Province in countless thousands, but they were by now so reduced in number as to be very near vanishing point.

In the face of the wanton slaughter of our game that has gone



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on for more than two centuries it is fortunate that so far only the quagga (a species of zebra) has become extinct and neither money nor tears will bring him back to life again; now we were threatened with the loss of an even more interesting type.

This was largely due to indiscriminate hunting, but also to the fact that the bontebok die out if they have to share their grazing with domestic stock; and of late years sheep farmers had increasingly invaded their ancestral haunts.

With my two companions I made a survey of the position. We examined the long strip of country that lies between Cape Agulhas and Algoa Bay, for in this area alone were a few of them said still to survive. It was hard work over the hills and dales of the south and after careful search we found that, all told, there were less than seventy bontebok left in the Union and therefore in the world, so narrow had the margin of safety become. These were running in small groups mostly in the neighbourhood of Cape Agulhas (the southernmost point of Africa) and it was clear that if immediate steps were not taken they would soon join the quagga in oblivion.

In the end I was able to find a suitable tract of land in the district of Bredasdorp. We had it enclosed by an eight-foot wire fence and enlisting the help of neighbouring farmers, sixteen bontebok were with difficulty shepherded through a V-shaped approach and driven into the sanctuary. To-day the rest of the bontebok have gone, but from those sixteen animals a herd of over two hundred has been bred up and the continued existence of *Damaliscus Pygcrgus* is assured.

When I returned to Parliament I was glad to find that Mr. Grobler had introduced a Bill to turn the Sabi into a statutory game reserve to be called the Kruger National Park. Under his Act a Board of Trustees was established and I was appointed one of their number.

This was a handsome gesture and while it in no way diminished my antipathy to the Nationalist government I was sincerely pleased, for it opened a new vista. From now onward I was enabled to journey to the Low Country at frequent intervals and more and more I was to come beneath its spell.

The moment Parliament rose the new Board of Trustees held its first meeting and we set to work with a will. There was much to do. In the Park there were as yet no roads, no bridges, no pontoons



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across the rivers and the sole means of access was on foot or by pack donkey.

The Low Country lies east by west from the Swaziland border along the Komati plains, thence over the Crocodile, the Sabie and the Olifant rivers up towards Tzaneen and the Zoutpansbergen, a distance of about three hundred miles. South to north it is held between the great escarpment of the Drakensberg and the Lebombo range, a breadth of a hundred miles. This great area was still little known and the larger portion of it lay inside what had now been proclaimed the National Park. Within its confines were elephant and lion, hippo and giraffe, roan and sable antelope; zebra, sassaby, koodoo, wildebeest, waterbuck and a great variety of other fauna such as probably no other portion of the world of equal size can show.

Our mandate as a Board was to create a refuge where henceforward the royal families of all the mammals could live in peace; our mandate was to put a stop to hunting and poaching and to open up the Reserve so that the public could visit it and learn the beauty of the wild life of South Africa.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was decided that the Members of the Board (there were eight of us) should proceed in twos, each couple to take stock of a different portion of the Reserve to prepare the ground for the laying down of roads, the building of rest camps and, above all, to provide crossings over the rivers.

Paul Selby and I were deputed to the Crocodile River area along the eastern borderline of the Park. He was an American by birth and a mining engineer by profession and he had spent most of his vacations in the Low Country studying its animal life and taking photographs. For these reasons he had wisely been nominated to the Board. He was a man of resource. He had started ahead of me, for I was detained, and when, ten days later, I alighted at a railway siding nearest to my destination in the Reserve, I found that he had succeeded in towing his car through the Crocodile River, the first car that ever entered the Park, and he was at a spot known as 'Dead Man's Bush' so called after three poachers who had recently been shot here.

He had discovered a suitable spot at which to place a pontoon and already he had made blueprints for its construction and had mapped out a road to the Sabie River on which a gang of native



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boys were hewing down trees and blazing the trail. I enjoyed the life and we saw much game. Giraffe, sable, wildebeest and buffalo fed in sight of our camp, though lion were not as plentiful as they have since become. We spent many hours taking pictures. In those days game photography was in its infancy. Few people had realized how little attention wild animals pay to motor-cars, and it was a novel experience to us to find that we could drive up to a troop of waterbuck or a herd of wildebeest while they grazed unperturbed. We thought at first that our success was due to the pains we took to cover our ancient Ford from stem to stern with boughs and foliage under which we sat crouched behind an old-fashioned box-camera swivelled on a universal joint like a machine-gun. Since then we have learned that these precautions were unnecessary, for game seems to register no emotion on the appearance of a car; but at the time we went to great trouble to camouflage our vehicle, and as we rattled and jolted over antheaps and fallen logs we thought we were very clever when we manœuvred ourselves near enough to take a shot. At present, every second tourist in the National Park takes photos of lion and other animals from his car with a pocket kodak, but Selby was the pioneer. His studies received wide notice and I basked vicariously for having helped him.

There was a troop of buffalo in Dead Man's Bush led by a bull whose horns we considered to be a world record. We spent much time trying to photograph him but he always hugged the deeper shadows.

For many years, poachers from the adjacent Portuguese territory had been raiding over the frontier to shoot game. They were generally half-breeds in command of gangs of Shangaan natives. Their practice was to come with pack donkeys and after shooting all they could they loaded the meat and decamped across the border. A sort of sporadic guerrilla warfare had been carried on against them with frequent casualties on both sides.

Selby and I planned the development of this section of the Park and I like to think that our labours have borne fruit. At all events, visitors now run in and out by car and they go to Lower Sabie and Skukuza in a few hours by the roads we laid down where it took us a month to hack our way through the jungle.

This was my first expedition as a Board Member but I was to go on many another similar journey. In time I learned the lore of the



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wilds, I learned to track game and I even became somewhat of a lion hunter; and increasingly I became a devotee of the Low Country.

## II

Early in the year 1900 I was serving with the republican forces in Natal. I took part in the siege of Ladysmith and in the Tugela battles and when we were at last pushed back we stood on the defensive on the Biggarsbergen, licking our wounds.

During the lull, I obtained home leave for a few days and travelled up by rail to Pretoria.

Pretoria is only thirty-five miles from Johannesburg and as I had never been to the Golden City my father and I took train one morning and ran across. The place seemed deserted, the streets were empty and doors and windows were boarded.

We walked about for most of the day and then, towards evening, there came a diversion. Suddenly, just as the street lights came on, a terrific explosion rent the air and a huge column of smoke shot a mile high into the sky where it stood towering like a great mushroom. On all sides we heard the crash of falling masonry and broken glass and men and women, previously invisible, poured into the streets making for the scene of the catastrophe. From their shouts we gathered that the government ammunition plant had blown up and we followed in their wake. Soon we reached a large block of buildings fiercely ablaze; shells and cartridges were detonating, sending spurts of green and yellow flames in all directions.

Some thirty dead men lay in a row on the pavement and wounded were being carried off. It was a grim scene and it is still a vivid memory for I was a boy at the time, of an age when things make a lasting impression.

My father and I helped where we could, and late that night we returned to Pretoria. Next morning there was intense anger when an official bulletin was issued stating that the disaster was the work of a British spy who, it was said, had connected a live wire from the municipal power station in such a manner that when the town lights were turned on the factory was set off.

Up through the intervening years I had nursed a grievance over this for I thought it a dastardly trick.



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Now I had fresh light shed on the subject. I had occasion to visit a town in the Eastern Transvaal on legal business and here I met a man named Begbie. In the course of conversation he told me that in 1895 he had erected an iron foundry in Johannesburg and he had built up a flourishing concern.

When the Boer War broke out however, President Kruger requisitioned his foundry and with the help of Netherlands railway engineers the place was turned into a munition work. Begbie was allowed to remain in the Transvaal, but he was forbidden access to his property, so he managed to get his Zulu servant Tom engaged as a Bossboy with instructions to report to his master from time to time as to the treatment the machinery and buildings were receiving.

The Europeans employed in making munitions were mostly Italian artisans, many of whom had flocked to the Rand on the discovery of gold.

A few days before the explosion, Tom came to Begbie with a troubled look. He said, 'Baas, old Tom very much afraid. Dem Italian peoples smoke cigarettes all time, all time, and dey throw de stumps over de place. Baas, soontime everything go bang—me plenty afraid.' Begbie allayed his fears and told him to return to duty and Tom went off mumbling and shaking his head. The plant went up within the week and poor Tom went up too.

Begbie said he had not the slightest doubt that this is how the accident happened and I believe his explanation is correct.

## III

In 1927 I once more attended Parliament. It was a fiery Session for the Nationalists introduced a Bill in which it was proposed to abolish the Union Jack and to substitute for it a purely local flag. We on our side of the House had no objection to a flag of our own, but we took the standpoint that the new flag should not outrage the sentiments of our English-speaking fellow-citizens and that it should contain a symbol of our membership with the British Commonwealth.

The Nationalists at first would have none of it and there was so much bitterness throughout the country that for a while we were on the verge of civil war. In the end, reason prevailed, and a



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compromise was arrived at in terms of which there was to be a distinctive South African flag flown alongside the Union Jack on our public buildings and on state occasions. Now we have two official capitals, two official languages, two official races, and two official flags, and somehow it works.

Later in the year the Prince of Wales arrived at Capetown on H.M.S. *Hood* and there was a succession of receptions and banquets in his honour, some of which my wife and I attended; but the only detail I can remember is an incident at a dinner at Government House.

The Prince stood on a dais to receive his guests, whose names were announced as they entered the hall by a loud-voiced herald.

Among the guests was one of our prominent financial magnates, Sir Jacob Graaf and his wife. When they came forward the herald in a stentorian tone proclaimed the arrival of 'Sir and Lady *Giraffe*'. There was a roar of merriment in which Sir Jacob and his spouse heartily joined.

I thought the Prince highly-strung and nervous and he seemed to hate the life of enforced publicity he had to lead.

Although the 'Flag Session' (as it was called) ended in a somewhat calmer atmosphere, feelings still ran high, especially in the rural districts, and both sides took the field—we to denounce the Nationalists for their racial bigotry during the flag debates, and they to cash in on the fact that we of the South African Party had insisted on and prevailed in keeping the Union Jack as an emblem of our country.

I had to address a number of meetings. These gatherings mostly ran true to form. There were the usual boos and heckling and votes of confidence and no confidence dear to the hearts of the farmers, and an occasional scuffle between hot-tempered zealots on both sides. But once I ran into more serious trouble. I was due to speak at three p.m. in a small village west of Pretoria. I arrived half an hour before my time and as we entered the single street I saw a commotion at the far end, with a crowd of people milling round. I thought it was a motor accident so I told my driver to hurry on. When I got there I found a free fight in progress in which a considerable number of combatants were knocking each other about. I pulled one of them from the fracas by the tail of his coat and he breathlessly explained that it was a political meeting. Thinking that some rival orator has forestalled me I asked whose



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political meeting it was. He replied, 'Colonel Reitz's political meeting', and he returned to the Donnybrook.

The mere fact that I was to speak, coupled with the opening of a new bottle-store that morning, had inflamed local opinion and the result was one of the worst uproars I had experienced since our post-rebellion elections of 1915.

They tell me that the floors of some of the town halls in the Free State bear traces to this day of bloodstains dating from my election meetings of those times and I remember being called upon for a cheque of eighty-two pounds in respect of damages to one municipality for broken chairs and doors and windows. The present mellay was as bad as any of them. I leaped on to an improvised platform that stood against a wood and iron tearoom, hoping to make myself heard and I was instantly seized by the legs and dragged down into the maelstrom below. Luckily the crowd was so densely packed that everyone was pinned by his neighbours and fists could scarcely be used; though once, as I glanced over my shoulder, I saw a frenzied partisan trying to bang a petrol box, subsequently found to be loaded with bricks, upon my devoted head.

By dint of the crowd swaying this way and that, the wall of the tearoom was stove in and I found myself precipitated, with others, right inside the building where we sprawled among the debris of cups and saucers and plates that cascaded from the broken shelves above.

When at length the hubbub subsided we had to telephone to Pretoria for motor ambulances to transport the more serious casualties and the mix-up resulted in a batch of lawsuits and much heartburning.

Needless to say the bad blood was all between Dutch-speaking Afrikaners and I don't suppose there was an Englishman present.

## IV

Parliament met again towards the end of the year and it was during this Session that some wiseacre discovered that because I had refused to take the oath of allegiance after the peace treaty in 1902 I was not a British subject and I was not entitled to sit in Parliament. Furthermore I had incurred a cumulative penalty for every day I had illegally held my seat.



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The lawyers declared that technically this was correct, so the Nationalist Government very decently introduced a Bill to validate my position. While the matter was under discussion I absented myself from the House in terms of a rule that a Member shall withdraw from a debate wherein his personal conduct is at issue, but Hansard has the following:

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Pirow): In introducing this Bill I need not go any further than to show what will happen to Colonel Reitz if it be not passed and if some enterprising Member were to take the matter to Court.

He is not entitled to sit in this House and what is more, he has incurred forfeitures to an enormous sum.

I have not permitted myself the pleasure of working out the exact amount at so many pounds a day for so many years, but I have been told that at a shrewd estimate it is in the vicinity of the German reparations.

I understand that an Hon. Member will move that the Bill be called the 'Deneys Reitz Relief Act'.

An Hon. Member (laughing): Mr. Speaker, in view of the doleful finances of the country, it would be as well if the Hon. Minister extracted from Colonel Reitz some of his illgotten gains. But, joking apart, I am glad that at long last he is to have his rights restored.

In this cheery manner the Bill was passed.



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# XI

# NORTHERN TRANSVAAL AND KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

## I

Early in 1928 I set off on a journey to the Northern Transvaal with a prospecting party to investigate an ancient gold working. These workings are fairly common, though it has not yet been established when and by whom they were operated. Theories on the subject range from King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba to Arab miners in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The working we were bound for lay in rough mountain country and it involved a long and difficult tramp before we located the spot. There were traces of old shafts and trenches and I picked up a number of stone hammer heads, but our prospectors, after a thorough survey, reported that owing to lack of water and to transport difficulties the mine was unpayable; so we reloaded our pack donkeys and toiled back to where a motor lorry awaited us nearer to civilization.

On our way south we stayed over at a small town and here I unexpectedly ran into my younger brother Rolf. He was a barrister and he told me he was defending a 'twin murder' case before the circuit court next morning.

Twin murders are practised among certain of our native tribes. They originate in the belief that whenever a child is born, another child is born in the jungle and this spirit-child is a banshee. When, therefore, twins appear the natives believe that one or other of them is an evil genius and as they cannot tell which is which, they take no chances and kill them both to be on the safe side.

So strong is the superstition and so great is the power of the medicine men that no woman dares to refuse their behest and she strangles her twins and faces a charge of murder rather than defy the tribal custom.

When I was a Cabinet Minister we frequently sat in appeal in



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these cases. Our custom was to commute the death sentence to imprisonment for a year or two as we knew that the accused had acted under duress but whenever there was evidence to incriminate a witch doctor we hanged him. This only happened twice in my time for as a rule a native is too frightened to testify against them.

When the court opened on the following day I strolled across to watch my brother handle his brief. The wretched mother stood weeping in the box and the body of the hall was filled with tribesmen who had come in for the occasion.

The first witness for the Crown was a policeman who stated that, on information received, he had visited the accused's village and behind a hut he had disinterred a calabash containing the dead bodies of two newly-born infants. The woman admitted that they were hers but said they had been stillborn.

My brother rose to cross-examine. He began by asking the policeman whether the calabash had been buried in dry ground or wet. At this the judge somewhat impatiently said, 'Surely, sir, the question is irrelevant?' I rather thought so myself and almost blushed at my brother's ineptitude, but he was unperturbed and with a shrug the judge allowed him to proceed. The policeman then replied that he had found the calabash in dry soil.

I was puzzled, for there was no sense in it and to make matters worse my brother now put an even more pointless request for he demanded to know whether the bodies of the two children had grass circlets around their necks or their wrists.

This was too much for the judge who irritably said, 'Tut, tut sir, you are trifling with the court; I must ask you not to waste my time.' Again I was inclined to agree with his lordship and again my brother seemed impervious to rebuke for he insisted that his questions had an important bearing on the case; so the judge with a pitying look told the witness he could answer the question.

The policeman thereupon replied that both twins had circlets of grass around their necks.

The witness was stood down and after some further evidence for the prosecution my brother called the local Native Commissioner. This official told the Court that he was well acquainted with the tribe the accused woman belonged to, having been stationed in the district for many years, and he said that it was their invariable custom when twins were stillborn to bury them



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in dry ground with plaited grass around their necks whereas if the twins had been strangled they were buried in swampy ground with grass about their wrists.

This collapsed the case for the Crown and I went off in the knowledge that my brother knew his job.

Since writing the above, I have come across the works of Miss Mary Kingsley, a niece of Charles Kingsley of *Westward Ho*. She appears to have travelled extensively in French Equatoria, Lagos and Sierra Leone and at all events she made a study of the fetishes and voodoos of the Gold Coast. She says about twin murders:

Twin killing holds good for over 2,000 miles, both among the Negro and the Bantu. It amounts to this. Twins are everywhere among African Negroes held in horror. The natives always believe that their origin is scandalous. One of the functions of the process of initiation to the secret society of a tribe, both male and female, is the assignment to each initiated member of a spirit companion. A child of a man is also a child of his spirit companion. That is to say it is part human and part spirit. Now, if it turns up as twins, the human has been encroaching on the rights of the spirit companion—it is a sort of adultery, therefore they have to be killed.

Allowing for tribal and other variations, there is a distinct family resemblance between the Gold Coast superstition and that current among our own natives.

## II

A few weeks later I travelled down to the Low Country again to see how work was progressing in the Kruger Park. By now things were well advanced; roads were being built, camps were being erected and already the area between the Crocodile and the Olifants River was accessible to tourists. The Reserve was rapidly taking shape under the guidance of Colonel Hamilton the Head Warden and a number of other European rangers we had appointed.

The main object of my journey was to seek a crossing over the Olifants River, as the Board was anxious to open up the as yet unknown Shingwedzi country that lay beyond and I had been asked to take the matter in hand.

I passed Skukuza on my way and there I saw a curious sight.



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A threequarter-grown hippo had been attacked and mauled by a troop of lion ten miles down the river. He had managed to escape and, strangely enough, some instinct had moved him to seek the white man's protection, for when I saw him he was standing on a sandbank just below the head warden's house where he had been for over a fortnight.

His sides were lacerated and the poor brute must have suffered agonies; the fish tore at his wounds when he entered the water and when he climbed out, the tick-birds and the flies tortured him. He allowed us to approach within a few yards of him and eventually he made a complete recovery.

From Skukuza I continued by easy stages to the Olifants River accompanied by ranger McDonald. A fair number of visitors were coming and going and McDonald who was a good teller of tales, used to amuse them with animal yarns to which they eagerly listened. He always took with him his native police-boy and one evening, sitting by a camp fire with several tourists, this gentleman furnished a comic interlude. Knowing how successfully his master was able to interest his hearers, the police-boy decided to try his own hand at it. He spoke good English and he began to spin an adventure which he said had befallen him.

He told of how he had been chased by a lion and how he had run for his life, the lion gaining on him until with a roar it leaped on him at last. At this point his powers of invention failed and he stopped dead. His audience had been following him with bated breath and one of them asked what happened next. He considered it his duty to round off his story satisfactorily and so answered with all simplicity, 'Baas, the lion *ate* me.'

I reached the Olifants River some miles above its junction with the Letaba and after a long search I found a suitable spot for a pontoon which in due course was built and launched by Paul Selby.

As I walked along the river-bank, the carcass of a dead hippo came drifting downstream and presently it grounded on a sand-spit. Outwardly there was no sign of injury, but when the natives skinned it we found that the flesh underneath was pulped along the backbone and ribs. The boys said an elephant had pounded it to death and later they showed me a mudhole beside the river all trampled and pitted where the battle had taken place.

On my return journey I went via a trading station called Acornhoek lying just outside the Kruger Park. A friend of mine named



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Whittingstall lived here and when I looked in at his house I found that he had recently been mauled by a lion.

He was a skilled hunter but he made the same mistake that so many others have made; he wounded a lion and went after him in thick bush. Ninety per cent of lion casualties are due to following a wounded animal into high grass or scrub.

A lion, like any other game, runs away if wounded, or if very badly hit and unable to go far, hides under cover, but if brought to bay he will charge, and it is then the accidents happen.

Whittingstall in his anxiety to finish off the lion followed it with his two native trackers. He told me the next thing he saw was a ball of yellow hurtling through the air towards him. He fired but was thrown to the ground and seized by the shoulder. His natives saved him. One of them pulled the lion by the tail as it stood over him and the other drove his assegai into its heart.

Whittingstall in firing had smashed the lion's right foot which forced it to balance on the remaining three legs so that it could not claw him. This probably also helped to save his life for while a lion's bite is serious enough, his teeth are more or less aseptic; but to be clawed is certain death from blood poisoning for the sheaths are clotted with decayed flesh.

Whittingstall told me his sensation was that of a powerful steel vice crushing his shoulderblade and arm, and the pain was awful.

He was taken to hospital and he made a good recovery. When next I saw him he said with a twinkle in his eye, for his newly-wedded wife was sitting beside him, that the most serious after-effect of his accident was that he had married the nursing sister who had looked after him.

## III

In this same year I undertook a flight over the Kruger National Park to study the reaction of game to low-flying aeroplanes. South Africa was becoming air-minded and private flying had increased to such an extent that complaints reached us of pilots who had taken to swooping down and stampeding the animals. The Board obtained Government consent to use Defence Force aeroplanes and I was asked to join in the venture. We obtained three single engined Wapitis, old-fashioned crates but with a long range and a cruising speed of about a hundred miles an hour.



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Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, the head of our air force, piloted me and the passengers in the other two machines were General Tanner, under whom I had served in France, and another member of the Board.

We took off from Pretoria at dawn and crossed the Transvaal highveld in three hours, then down the Olifants River gorge banking round the corners of the cliffs and nearly skimming the water at times. Thence out over the Low Country still following the river. Here the plane carrying General Tanner made a forced landing in the bush and we only heard afterwards that no one was hurt. We continued on, criss-crossing over elephant, giraffe and other game, roaring close overhead to watch the effect. The animals seemed bewildered at the noise and they milled about wildly. Some herds stampeded so frantically that we judged they would not come to a halt until they reached Portuguese territory. Even the crocodiles on the sandbanks went somersaulting into the water for safety and we were able to collect useful data from which the Board subsequently framed its regulations as to flying over the Park.

We went as far as the Olifants junction from where we turned east over the Sabie country and crossing the Barberton hills we flew over Swaziland and sat down at last in a clearing beside the Pongola River in Northern Zululand after a non-stop run of eight hundred miles. Next morning hundreds of natives flocked in from the surrounding jungle to see the strange things that had appeared from the sky, and there was much chattering and excitement. The other plane refused to start owing to battery trouble and Sir Pierre and I took off without it. We headed for lake Sibaya and everywhere we saw the natives running for shelter as ours was the first plane that had passed here. Then out over the Indian Ocean and up along the little-known coastline as far as the mouth of the Kosi River.

Once, as we sped along, there was a Tonga woman on the beach. She was carrying a baby in her arms and the sudden appearance of our plane as we rounded the dunes so terrified her that she dropped the infant and ran into the scrub. The child lay where it had fallen and we saw a wave creeping towards it. Sir Pierre circled and tried to land in order to effect a rescue, but before he could do so the mother rushed back and rescued her offspring. From Kosi Bay we turned inland once more and after flying up



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the Usutu canyon we emerged on the high veld and reached Pretoria by sunset, having covered a great deal of ground. Thus we completed an interesting excursion.

A week later I took part in a hectic by-election in the Eastern Transvaal. There was serious rioting and feelings ran high, but our candidate got in by a narrow margin. For the rest, I opened an agricultural show or two, made many speeches in various constituencies, and then revisited the Kruger Park under somewhat unusual circumstances.

## IV

The Board of Trustees, wishing to secure the goodwill of the Prime Minister, had invited General Hertzog to visit the Park and I was one of the hosts.

General Hertzog and I had not been on speaking terms since the Botha-Hertzog feud of 1912, but we thawed somewhat during the journey and I had to admit that he made a charming and courteous guest. He was a strange man. Like General Smuts he was university-bred and a fine classical scholar but he was a fierce hater. I had originally met him during the Boer War when, under his command, I took part in a spirited encounter against the British near the Orange River.

After the peace of Vereeniging he became the leader of a *risorgimento* movement designed to champion the cause of the Afrikaans people, their language and their culture.

At the passing of the Act of Union in 1910, when General Botha became our first Prime Minister, he was included in the Cabinet but proved a difficult colleague. A split soon developed. He hived off and formed the Nationalist Party which we of the South African Party had been fighting ever since.

As I was the son of a former republican President and one who had served through the Boer War and gone into exile rather than submit to British rule, General Hertzog took it for granted I would support him, but by that time I had come to understand the evils of overdone race worship and I followed the policy of General Botha and of General Smuts. He never forgave me and I had consistently opposed him ever since. Now we were thrown together in a neutral zone so to speak. We had to be on good behaviour towards each other and I began dimly to see that in the fervour



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of our political wrangles I had perhaps judged him somewhat hardly.

I was a strong believer in the friendship of the British and I hoped that within the restraining influence of the Empire it would be possible to build up a nation out of the Dutch and English people in our country. I had always thought that General Hertzog was a narrow racialist with a deep-rooted hatred of our English fellow citizens but from the talks we now had I gathered that while he suffered from an exaggerated Afrikaner complex, he appeared to have a real desire for co-operation and racial peace in South Africa. I had always found him to be illogical and somewhat muddleheaded yet I glimpsed a side of his character that made me less hostile, a matter that was not without important results some years later.

We saw elephant, lion, giraffe and much other game and we so impressed General Hertzog that we never had any difficulty afterwards in obtaining adequate funds from the Nationalist Government for carrying on the affairs of the Park.

At the conclusion of the tour we all returned to Pretoria together and I spent the closing days of 1928 with General Smuts on his ranch. While he botanized I accompanied him on his rambles and we talked of old times and of things to come.



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# XII

## GENERAL ELECTION AND SANDRINGHAM RELAXATIONS

### I

The Nationalist Government's five yearly term of office expired in March 1929 and another general election was due.

I had been Member of Parliament for Port Elizabeth since 1922 and in spite of my infrequent appearance among them my constituents had put up with me and they asked me to stand again. But now I received an offer I could not resist, for I was asked to fight the Low Country seat. At the time of Union the whole of the Low Country had been carved into a single parliamentary district (called Barberton) which the Nationalists had held in unbroken succession since 1915. They looked on it as one of their strongholds but my growing acquaintance with it and its people decided me that the time had come to wrest it from them, for I had long been hankering after so fascinating a constituency, more especially as the whole of the Kruger Park lay within its boundaries. Somewhat ungratefully I said good-bye to Port Elizabeth and prepared to invade new territory.

The long travail of a General Election now began. Our prospects were not good. It was true that the Nationalists were losing ground, for in a democracy it is almost axiomatic for any government to weaken from the first day it attains power, as disgruntled place-hunters and self-seekers who cannot get what they want turn and rend it.

But General Hertzog was still a formidable opponent and he still possessed a strong following among our Dutch-speaking element. I took an active share and I lent a hand all over South Africa, rushing about by rail and road and air and at intervals I returned to canvass my domain.

The Low Country with its mountains and rivers and jungle is beautiful and picturesque, but it makes for difficult electioneering.



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Nature has divided it into so many watertight compartments that I had to travel on horseback and on foot to secluded valleys, isolated mining camps, and distant forestry settlements. I ranged from the heights of Kamshlobaan overlooking the Swaziland plains to Komatipoort on the Portuguese border and up along the slopes of the Drakensberg to Tzaneen in the far north. I visited squatters and farmers on their ranches and small communities tucked away between the rivers. There were up-to-date fruit-growing centres and there were scattered groups hidden in folds of the Berg who still lived and thought in terms of the old republican days of thirty years ago. It was strenuous work carried out in addition to my activities in other parts of the country.

I found that my membership on the Park Board was a liability instead of an asset. Once, while I was addressing a gathering under a tree on the bank of the Crocodile River, an old Dutch farmer rose to complain that hippo from the Kruger Park had raided his farm the night before and consumed £200 worth of his tomatoes, and he said if I did not take better care of the animals in my charge, he and his neighbours would vote against me. On another occasion, just as I was getting into stride, a herdboy rushed up to say that a crocodile had pulled his master's bull into the water and here again the blame fell on my shoulders.

A few days later I was travelling along in a small open car with the secretary of our party. The road was a mere track with grass standing high between the ruts. Suddenly we bumped into a full-grown lion that must have been lying asleep in front of us. He leapt aside with an angry snarl and it looked as if he meant to come at us.

The engine had stalled and for a moment we faced an ugly situation for we carried no arms. Then my companion got the two-seater started and we moved off. I was due to address a meeting in Barberton town in the evening and I made use of that lion. I said: 'Ladies and gentlemen the election is going well but this morning we had the first setback.' The audience pricked up at this and I went on to tell of our collision. I said that as I knew the lion wasn't on the voters' roll we did not stop to argue with him.

The story went well and I got a motion of full confidence.

Up in the mountains are Boer colonies settled here for nearly a century. To them time stopped at the close of the war in 1902. The Great War had reached them but as a dim echo from the outside



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world and their politics still hinged on forgotten controversies of the past. A man who surrendered to the British columns in 1900 is an outcast and only those who fought to the end are held in respect. I clambered up to meet a number of these sturdy mountaineers, bigoted and primitive, but fine and brave and obstinate. As I began to speak, a weatherbeaten veteran rose and turning to the rest he said in Dutch, 'Before allowing the candidate to proceed we want to know where he was in the last war.' I was just about to reply that I had served in East Africa and in France when he supplemented his question by saying, 'What I mean is did he serve with General Botha or in the Free State with General de Wet?' I answered that I had served under them both right up to the end. I think I got most of their votes.

By the time polling day arrived I was a physical wreck but I was Member of Parliament for the Low Country.

In the rest of South Africa our Party fared badly and the Nationalists were returned to power by a large majority, so once more we were doomed to the outer regions. Indeed, my victory was the only bright spot, for it was the only seat we captured from our enemies in the whole of the Union, whereas they had taken a number of seats from us.

As I was sitting in my compartment at the railway station at Pretoria next morning I heard two porters discussing the election results. They spoke in Afrikaans and they were obviously Nationalist supporters. One of them said, 'Yes we have won the election, but the only pity is that 'daardie bogger' Colonel Reitz is back in Parliament again.'

## II

Now that I was Member for the Low Country I took a step I have never regretted. With the growing lure of the wilds I purchased a tract of land known as Sandringham. It lay close to the Kruger Park and had big game of many kinds; roan and sable, zebra, koodoo, wildebeest, sassaby, waterbuck and lion; and to crown it all there was a section of the Shangaan tribe with a petty chief and witch doctor complete. They were elemental savages armed with spears and they owed me allegiance by virtue of my owning the ground; so I was a sort of feudal baron with a tail of warriors at my call.



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I made the purchase not only for myself but for my two boys. John was eight and Michael was five and I wished them to know the beauty of the Low Country, to learn its woodcraft and to learn self-reliance and how to handle firearms.

From then onward we have been down every year. We pitch camp on the bank of the Umbabat, a watercourse that runs on a frontage of nearly ten miles across the property, and to guard against lion we build a zareba of thorn branches inside which we erect our tents and many are the interesting things we have seen and done on Sandringham.

Almost at once we had what the boys thought was a great adventure. On the morning after our first arrival we came on a kill in the shape of a dead wildebeest and it was clear that he had been pulled down overnight by a lion; so we returned to consult Mafanela the witch doctor. He was a villainous old scoundrel but noted for his ability to track lion. He cleared a space on the ground with his foot, threw the bones and muttered the usual incantations. Then he declared the omens to be propitious and he agreed to accompany us to where the carcass of the wildebeest lay.

My wife and boys came along too for it was their first lion hunt.

When we reached the spot, Mafanela carefully examined the spoor and he said four lion were close at hand. I ordered him to follow their tracks which led towards a thicket about three hundred yards away.

Mafanela was carrying my shotgun in case we flushed a covey of partridges on the return journey, and I had a rifle. As we approached the thicket he grunted disapprovingly and said the lion would have made off as there were too many of us in the party. However, we continued, and despite his prophecy, four lion suddenly rose up and growled at us in unison. To my horror I saw Mafanela raise the shotgun and aim at the nearest animal. Knowing the probable effect of peppering a lion with a No. 6 cartridge I rushed forward to stop him, but luckily he did not understand the mechanism of the gun and he had not pulled over the hammers. By the time I had knocked up the weapon the lion had disappeared in the bush, as they generally do after the initial roar which as often as not is a bluff intended to cover their retreat.

As a hunt the affair had not been a conspicuous success but John and Michael had a close-up view and they crowed with delight at having gone after real lion.



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From the start we have adhered to the rule that there was to be no unnecessary shooting on Sandringham, and we hunted only for the pot. It was a day or two afterwards that I took John on his first attempt at big game. With a smelly native guide we tramped through the bush until we came on a herd of sable. I tried to manœuvre John close enough to ensure a mortal hit but the sable were restive. As long as we continued to move they grazed quietly, but the moment we halted they were off, as is the manner of all antelopes. This happened a number of times and John's face grew tense with disappointment. At last I tried an old ruse. Animals cannot count, so we walked obliquely until we were within a hundred yards of our quarry and as we passed an antheap I whispered him to drop down while the native and I walked on. He did so and the sable failed to notice the decrease in our number and seeing us still moving they remained standing long enough for John to drop a magnificent bull.

He was so overcome with excitement that he flung his arms round my neck in an impulsive embrace and not content with this he hugged the Shangaan and gave him a smacking kiss, greatly to that worthy's astonishment. I sent for an ox-drawn sled on which the sable was loaded and we made a triumphal return to camp, John riding proudly astride his victim.

That night I watched the little fellow. He stood with his hands clasped behind his back gazing into the log fire, evidently deep in a brown study. At last he heaved a sigh of content and turning to me he said, 'Daddy, I can't hardly believe it really happened to me.' He has since gone on many another adventure but I think his first sable will remain the greatest memory of them all.

I shot birds, for partridge, pheasant and guinea fowl are plentiful and on occasion I hunted lion.

Nowadays tourists in the Kruger Park see many lion. They loll in the shade and they look harmless enough from a motor-car, but waking them up in the scrub is another matter. This is not a hunting narrative but I give one instance of a lion hunt I took part in.

During the following year when we were once again at Sandringham Mr. Whittingstall came to my camp one morning, long recovered from his hurts. He said a native youth had been mauled by a lion some hours before and he was in a kraal near by. It was unusual for a lion to attack a human being in broad daylight and as he thought it might be a maneater he suggested that we should



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go after it. We set out and proceeded to the kraal where the native lay to find out where the attack had taken place but we could get no information as he was unconscious and died that afternoon. We collected two men from the village to serve as trackers and started off. The grass stood breast-high and the going was heavy, but with marvellous skill they followed the course along which the wounded boy had come; and after four or five miles we found an axe and a bundle of poles and it was evident from the pools of blood and other signs that this was where the tragedy had occurred. The lion must have charged him while he was chopping wood and he had been carried for about thirty yards. Then for some reason the lion had released him. The poor fellow had vainly tried to defend himself, for the axehead was covered with tufts of hair. He had managed to drag himself to the village where we had seen him and one can imagine the untold agonies he suffered during that terrible journey.

Our natives now cast around and they returned to say that from the tracks they judged three lion to be close by.

Most people have the Biblical idea that lions raven abroad seeking whom they may devour. This is true of lions after dark, but in the daytime, as often as not, they lie low and one has almost to step on them before they break cover.

We decided to beat the scrub in which they were lying, Whittingstall taking the one side and I the other. The thicket was only about two hundred yards wide, but though we walked through it several times we found no lion. We were inclined to give it up, for the heat was stifling and we could scarcely believe that the lion were still there. The natives, however, were emphatic; the spoor led within and there were no outward tracks, they said, so we decided on a final attempt. We entered about fifty yards apart and as I came on a denser patch three lion rose at me from about six feet away and they emitted the most appalling noise I have ever heard. Had they charged me I would have been lost, but here again they were bluffing. I had time only to hit the nearest brute and before I could fire again the other two bolted into the jungle. It sounds safe and easy and I have done it a number of times since then, but it is not quite so safe and easy as it sounds.

The fact remains that lion will seldom molest a man in the daytime. During the years I have camped on Sandringham I have often hunted them, and my trouble has been that they run for it



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before one can get in a shot. I once put up a huge male. He clawed at me and as I fired, no less than six other lion came tearing past from behind. They had crouched in the undergrowth and allowed me to pass them and only when they heard the sound of my shot did they come racing along, almost brushing me in their haste to get away.

Another time, Lady Mary Grosvenor, daughter of the Duke of Westminster, wished to enter the Kruger Park. As it was out of season I took her in by virtue of my membership on the Board. One evening we came on a troop of eight lion trotting towards the car. I could see they were merely inquisitive, but as I did not want them to frighten my guest I jumped out and waved my hat at them, knowing that they would clear off. They did so, but I had great trouble in convincing Lady Mary that I had not performed an act of derring-do.

This rule has its exceptions, for if a man comes on a lioness with cubs, or a lion at its kill, or in the mating season, there may be trouble.

Another erroneous idea, sponsored by the Book of Daniel, is the one about a lion's den.

In all Africa I have not known a lion to live in a cavern or a den, for he has no fixed abode, and he invariably lies-up under a tree or a bush to sleep or rest.

We had other interesting experiences on Sandringham. One winter my boys and I rode out at daybreak with only a saloon rifle, intending to try for a guinea-fowl. Buffalo had never been known within a hundred miles of here and yet, on this particular morning, as we hitched our horses to a tree and walked forward into some bush where we had seen a flock of birds disappear, there stood two enormous buffalo bulls facing us. They were only a few yards from us and they were in a bad temper. Their eyes gleamed like living coals and they pawed the ground angrily, throwing dust over their shoulders the while and advancing slowly. It was a dangerous moment. I told John and Michael not to run but to back quietly from tree to tree. They kept their heads and obeyed and as soon as we were in the open once more the buffalo retired back into the shade whence they had come. The natives reported that they were two rogue bulls from Portuguese territory and their ill-temper was due to their having been shot at with muzzleloaders and blunderbusses.



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What would have happened had they charged us does not bear thinking about for the popgun I carried would have been worse than useless. When I returned later in the day with a 9 mm. rifle the animals had disappeared and we never saw them again.

Another time John and I were resting under a tree half-way down the sloping bank of the river when a cane rat shot past us, flying for his life. Behind him, from the bank overhead, followed the largest mamba I have ever seen. The snake was at least twelve feet long and it missed us by inches, its body straight as a lance, only its head raised out of alignment.

Rat and serpent vanished into the reeds but had it contacted either of us it would doubtless have buried its fangs, for a mamba is the fiercest and deadliest of all our reptiles. So swift are its movements that I have seen one dart across my path and rubbed my eyes, not quite certain that I had seen it at all.

I know of only one case where a man was bitten and lived to tell the tale. He was a friend of mine and as he crossed a footbridge in Zululand, a mamba reared up from the grass and struck him in the thigh. So great was the impact that he was thrown to the ground. Luckily he carried an anti-snakebite outfit and he injected the serum at once but he was at death's door for six months, and for two years thereafter he lay in hospital.

I have another friend in the Low Country who had a Shangaan servant possessed of a concoction which rendered him immune to snakebite, for the odour nauseated them. This native would walk up to a mamba and with his bare hands cuff it on both sides of its head as it reared. The mamba would hiss and make as if to strike but the stench of the *muti* was overpowering and it would draw back, whereupon the Shangaan would seize and drop it into a calabash held in readiness.

In course of time this native quarrelled with a Swazi headman in the neighbourhood. The Swazis look upon the Shangaan tribe as an inferior caste and the headman had made no secret of his contempt for the snake catcher. He took a strange revenge. My friend walked along at daybreak one morning to hunt and there rose before him a mamba swaying from side to side, neither advancing nor retreating.

He thought this curious so he shot the creature and on closer examination he found that it was leashed by the tail to a stake sunk in the middle of the pathway. Further on lay the dead body of the



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Swazi headman and on his chest were the mamba's imprints. The headman had been to a beer drink during the night and staggering to his kraal along the beaten track he had walked into the tethered snake and met his doom.

Late one night we were aroused on Sandringham by the sound of lion snarling and grunting around our camp. I reached for my electric torch and walking to the gate I flashed a light. In the beam there stood a tawny lioness on her hindlegs tearing at the wildebeest meat we had hung from the branches of a tree about fifteen yards away.

On the ground lay two more lion crunching a hindquarter they had already pulled down.

My wife and John and Michael peered over my shoulder at the strange scene. Then all three lion bounded away into the dark. Presently we heard them about the pots and pans in the smaller skerm where we did our cooking, then they came scratching at the thorn fence that surrounded our camp and showed every intention of breaking in.

I told John to fetch my rifle. To my alarm he said he had locked it in the car to prevent the dew from rusting the barrel. As the car was under the very tree where hung our meat and where first we had seen the animals I was in a quandary. The lion seemed determined to get into our camp and I realized that if they did there would be a tragedy which would be blamed on me, so in sheer desperation I decided to fetch the weapon. I walked outside and turned my torch on them where they were at the fence. They retired and I now saw all three of them crouch down close to the car. They lay motionless as lion will do in a beam of light, and with my heart in my mouth I walked forward slowly for I knew that at any sign of haste or irresolution they would pounce on me. The brutes watched me intently, their eyes gleaming like emeralds, but they made no move and at last, after a few seconds, though it seemed an age, I was near enough to leap at the door of the car, turn the handle, and I was safe inside. I found the rifle fully loaded and as it is almost impossible to hold a torch and aim at the same time I had to satisfy myself with loosing several shots in their direction and so drive them away. I shall not easily forget my passage across.

One year a young nephew was camping with us. He went out at dawn carrying only a shotgun, intending to shoot partridge. At



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breakfast time he had not yet returned. By noon we began to wonder, and his mother grew uneasy, and when at dusk he was still missing we realized that he had lost himself in the bush. We fired shots; we hoisted hurricane lamps up tall trees and we patrolled the road all night without a sign of him.

His mother aged ten years by morning for the lion had roared louder than ever and she was in terrible distress.

We knew that apart from wild beasts, the boy must be without water for there is none on Sandringham except in the river, and clearly he had missed his way in the jungle beyond, otherwise he could have returned by following its course.

It was not till noon next day that he was led in by a native who had found him wandering in a circle, half demented with thirst after a night spent at a burning log with lion and leopard going and coming within the glare of his fire.

Very few Europeans lived in the vast scrub country that lies around Sandringham and these were practically outlaws.

They generally subsisted by poaching game and they made rare visits to some trading station to exchange skins and dried meat for ammunition. Mostly they were Dutch for we Dutch are nomads, and we are difficult people. I came across some of them occasionally and once I had trouble. I found a bearded giant who had halted his ox-wagon beside the road on my ground. With him were his wife and daughter each weighing about two hundred pounds.

I did not mind his cattle grazing on my land nor the pile of firewood he had collected, but when I asked him whither he was going he pointed north and said he proposed cutting a road across-country as he was making for the Olifants River.

This would involve the making of a new highway right athwart my property for poachers to follow so I emphatically forbade him. Thereupon he jumped down from his wagon and he fetched his rifle threatening to kill any man who tried to prevent him.

I was unarmed; my son John was with me, and I could not afford to run any risks so I drove back to camp to fetch my rifle. When I returned to the wagon I repeated my orders about the road.

He was truculent, but I covered him and he then gave in. I told him if he cut that road I would shoot every one of his trek oxen and thereafter, if he persisted, I would shoot him. I commanded



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him to stay where he was for the night and next morning my boys and I turned up, each carrying a firearm, and we escorted him and his wagon to a point beyond Sandringham after which we let him go his way.

He uttered threats as to what he was going to do to me, and months later, when I was absent in Parliament, he defied my instructions and did actually cut the road.

On our next visit we dug a booby trap into which he fell. He was seriously injured and thereafter he left us alone and now the road he made has reverted to the jungle once more.

I went down alone one Christmas. It poured heavily and the ground was so sodden that I could go neither backward nor forward and I spent the better part of a week curled up in the back of my car.

It was too damp to light a fire and I lived on biscuits and tinned foods. As I gazed through the windows at the driving rain I felt like a frog in an aquarium and in the distance the lion roared dolefully at the filthy weather. I did not repeat the experiment in the wet season.

These are a few of the things we did on Sandringham. We travel thither every winter. We do little hunting and we pass our time studying the game and we make long expeditions on foot and on horseback.

I shoot birds and sometimes we go after lion. In this manner, during the years, the place has afforded my two sons much joy, and to me it has been such a refuge from our political troubles that we look on it as a terrestrial paradise.



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# XIII

## LION HUNTS AND FALSE BAY FISHING

### I

In January 1930 the victorious Nationalists summoned Parliament and we of the South African Party belaboured them. I forget what it was all about, but I took part with zest and I delivered many speeches all deeply interred in *Hansard.*

The Prince of Wales paid us a second visit and he invited me to a private lunch at Government House. I had lately published a book named *Commando,* written in Madagascar nearly thirty years ago, in which I described my experiences during the Boer War. He had read it on the voyage out and he wished to discuss it with me. He was even more nervous and highly-strung than when last I had seen him.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw came to South Africa too a little later and he likewise asked me to lunch as he had read my book.

I envied him his literary career and I admired his cheek, but unluckily I failed to remember his invitation and went for a swim instead. I heard afterwards that he was furious and he did not renew the offer. Nevertheless I achieved greater distinction as the man who forgot to lunch with 'G.B.S.' than if I had kept the appointment.

For the rest, I attended to my private affairs, spoke at numerous political meetings in the country districts, made an occasional tour through my constituency and went into the Kruger Park as often as I could, for I loved the work we were doing there.

On one of these trips I was accompanied by Mr. Oswald Pirow, the Nationalist Minister of Justice who had piloted my Relief Bill through the House. He was on the Board and we were sworn political enemies, but for our common interest in the Low Country we were personal friends.

The whole of the Kruger Park lies in my electoral division and once, as we stood watching a team of oxen pulling our car through a river, a troop of old-man baboons came barking towards us.



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Pirow: Look, here are some of your constituents to welcome their Member of Parliament.

Myself: If those baboons voted for me, they showed a damn sight more intelligence than the people who voted for you.

Pirow: Shake hands: we're all square.

Pirow had visited Russia shortly before and as we travelled along he said that in Moscow he was taken over the Kremlin by a guide who spoke broken English and French.

In discussing the Soviet Government Pirow hazarded the view that it was a good thing to have a parliamentary opposition to keep things equal.

'Opposition, M'sieu,' said the guide, 'venez avec moi, and I weel show zem to you.' Leading him to a window he pointed at a cemetery behind the fortress where lay some five hundred newly made graves. 'L'opposition, M'sieu, les voilà.'

Pirow thought this was rather a neat way of dealing with oppositions but being in opposition myself I was not amused.

During the course of the same morning he watched an athletic display on the Red Square. There was running and jumping and hurdling, and he suggested that it was a pity the art of boxing had not been included in the curriculum.

The Soviet leaders, however, have their tenderer moments. They had disposed of their parliamentary foes by wholesale liquidation, but the guide answered, 'Le Boxe M'sieu, ze government 'ave prohibit le Boxe, zey tink il est trop brutale.'

We reached Sabie Bridge that night and Colonel Stevenson Hamilton, the famous warden, hospitably entertained us at his headquarters, for there was as yet no accommodation for travellers.[1]

Colonel Hamilton has probably shot more lion than anyone living. He kills them when it is necessary but he is also their arch protector and he has studied their habits for nearly a lifetime.

That evening, as we sat overlooking the river, he told us something of their ways. He said that as a rule lionesses cub down in June whereas the rest of the Low Country fauna litter in December of every year. His theory is that nature has thus ordained it so that the cubs are about six months old when the kids and calves and foals of the *impala*, wildebeest and zebra arrive and they can therefore start practising to hunt on the newly-born young and then gradually work up to the catching of larger prey as they grow

[1] See Colonel Hamilton's book, *The Low Veld and its People.*



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stronger. If Hamilton is correct, it seems a fiendishly cruel system.

He told us further that a lioness occasionally reaches maturity without finding a mate. To satisfy her maternal instinct she will adopt her sister's cubs, and she turns herself into what he calls a 'maiden aunt'. While the parents are away hunting, she mothers and looks after them, petting and fondling them and she does this during the months of their babyhood after which she waits for the next litter and repeats the process.

As to this, I once shot two lionesses with a right and left and my native trackers told me that they were twin sisters, six years old, and that they had never been mated. There were cubs in the bush beyond.

From here I went to open a bridge across the Komati River on the Portuguese frontier. A number of their officials had been invited and we toasted them in lukewarm champagne, for the barometer stood at 114 degrees in the shade.

For 1931, entries in my notebook are scanty. I took an active part in the political war which ran turbulent as ever, and I visited the Game Reserve several times to see how things were going.

I find that I accompanied an American oil king and his wife into the Park. They brought with them two secretaries, a valet and a chauffeur, cheery young fellows who were delighted at the prospect of spending several days among the game as had been planned. But I overdid my staff work, for in the course of the first morning, knowing where lion most frequented, I took the party down along the Sabie River and we came on twenty-one in a few hours. This was too much for the magnate's better half. She ordered us to return to camp and to pack up. She said she refused to remain another minute in this savage country and she had us all out of the Reserve by four o'clock that afternoon.

My diary says further that a few weeks later, also during the closed season, I took Sir James Reynolds M.P., for Liverpool, to the Park; I showed him lion, giraffe and much other game; a lioness tried to charge us, and we encountered a terrific c clone and torrential floods.

I see too that a meeting I held in the Northern Free State was wrecked through an ill-timed joke. My listeners were mostly Nationalist opponents and I held forth on their unreasonable attitude. I said that no matter how hard we tried to satisfy them they were always discontented and to illustrate this I told a story



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of the man who bought an Irish terrier: The first night he locked it in the kitchen and it scratched at the door and howled all night.

Next morning he said, 'As you don't want to stay inside you can sleep in the open,' and he locked him out.

That night the terrier scratched at the door and howled all night trying to get back.

The third evening the man said, 'If I lock you in you howl, if I lock you out you howl, so now you can do as you please,' and he left the door open for the terrier to stay in or out as he liked. That night the animal sat on the threshold howling all night. When I told the meeting that the Nationalists reminded me of that dog, they rushed my platform and we ended in free fights and a general uproar.

My family and I had a narrow escape about this time. There was a well-known pilot in Johannesburg, Mr. Cochran Patrick. He had assembled a new Dragon plane and he invited my wife and boys and myself on a test flight. We sat on empty petrol boxes and as he had several thousand flying hours to his credit I felt no anxiety, though I did not like the careless manner in which he banked and turned, and when we landed I noticed that the plane keeled over until one wing tip was practically skimming the ground.

I think it was a case of familiarity breeding contempt as he did things a less experienced flyer would never have attempted. He shut off one engine to prove that he could fly on the other alone and he slowed down to almost stalling point before revving up again.

When we grounded I heard one of the mechanics say, 'We don't like that kind of flying here, it gives the Club a bad name.'

Next morning he went up with Sir Bernard Oppenheimer and he stalled the machine. It fell like a stone and when the two men were dragged out they were both dead.

## II

Parliament sits at Capetown for five months per annum but on looking through my little pocket diaries such as one receives from business firms by way of advertisement every Christmas, references to the doings of the House are meagre. On the other hand there are many entries with regard to fishing, such as 'Out on Bay',



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'Sailed *Lucky Jim*', 'Big haul at Cape Point', 'Spent night at sea', '68-pounder on 2·0 line', etc., etc.

The Bay in question is False Bay and John and Michael and I have derived almost as much pleasure from its waters as from Sandringham itself. I told them I was writing about Sandringham in a book and they demanded that I should write about False Bay too.

By the time this journal is published (if ever it be published), I shall have fished on False Bay off and on for twenty years, and during the latter half of this time my boys have fished with me, always during the Parliamentary Sessions.

False Bay is aptly named. Unlike Table Bay on the opposite side of the Cape Peninsula, it is a treacherous expanse. Dead calm one moment, and then fierce south-easters beat in from the Antarctic; the waves lash mountain-high, everything on board bangs and pitches from rail to rail, and one has to run for shelter without loss of time.

The mouth of the Bay is thirty miles wide and from the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Hangklip it lies open to the great swells rolling in; and it requires good seamanship to navigate its stormy reaches in an open boat.

But the weather is not always rough, and the days I best remember are those when we sailed at dawn, the surface smooth as glass. As the fog slowly lifted, we saw vast flocks of malagasy duck and terns and seagull and cormorant diving into the shoals of sardine, the fall of the birds lashing and churning the sea like shellfire in France.

Amid this hurly-burly come schools of porpoise, a whale or two, and seals and penguins and sharks, the whole forming a spectacle probably unequalled anywhere in the world. Then we throw out our lines and pull in great fish—Cape Salmon, cabillaud, Steenbras and other kinds weighing from fifteen to thirty-five pounds and more—until our fingers are numbed and the boat is down by the head with the weight of our capture.

We used to go out on *Lucky Jim*, an eleven tonner belonging to our friend Mr. Jim Taylor, the Grand Old Man of False Bay. He was possessed of great wealth and great kindness. He held broad tolerant views on South African affairs and his knowledge of the Bay and its moods was unrivalled. As often as wind and weather permitted he took us with him and many are the happy hours we spent in his company.



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The False Bay fishermen are a breed unto themselves, mostly coloured people, with a dash of Malay blood in their veins, and the lives they lead are those of Captains Courageous and the Newfoundland Banks.

The howling storms often make communication by word of mouth impossible so they have evolved a sign language of their own. This is only for the elect and it is not until one has become a member of the lodge, so to speak, that they will initiate an outsider to its mysteries. Mr. Taylor and John and Michael and I have by now been accepted as belonging to the craft and we know the cabala of the Bay. In passing other boats we put hand to forehead, touch our left cheek or right, or lip or chin; we make three cuts across our arm or dip our tackle high or low, bend a wrist as if to kill a mackerel, or describe a circle, and those across the water have been told what fish are running, how deep the nearest bank, and whether seal or shark have interfered with our lines, and the time of day.

The fishermen have grown so accustomed to their alphabet that even in port a man will ask for a match to light his pipe, tell of his thirst, or say he is turning in, by show of hand instead of by word of mouth.

Another matter they will not reveal to any but those who have graduated into their confidence is the lie of the banks. These are located by means of secret crossbearings on points along the shore, and in time we came to know them so well that we are able to cast anchor on the fishing grounds almost as expertly as the men themselves. From the colour of the water, the strength of the currents, and the behaviour of the birds we can forecast what fish are running, and we are acquainted with every headland and indentation along the seventy miles of coastline.

There are nearly a hundred varieties of edible fish in the Bay and there must be few places where finer sport is to be had on rod and line.

At all events my boys look on Sandringham and the Bay as the two most delectable spots on earth and they are proud of their accepted status on the banks.

We had trouble with the seals. They breed on an island and for years Mr. Taylor and I have conducted a quarrel with the Union Fisheries about them, for whenever we complain of their depredations we are told that they live on crustacea alone and that they do not eat fish.



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Having frequently been robbed of our catches, we wax indignant every time we receive this reply, but we have failed up to the present to convince the government officials that they are wrong.

A seal will come swimming around a boat and when a fish is hooked one feels a sharp tug and hauling in the line finds only the head dangling, the seal having taken the rest.

Once a seal starts on this it is useless shifting anchorage for he will follow the boat and repeat his tactics until we give up in despair and return to harbour.

It is illegal to shoot seals in False Bay but we carry a small rook rifle to frighten them.

An old bull seal, however, refused to scare. We knew him well from a white mark on his shoulder and he often worried us. One morning he took a dozen cape salmon from my hook and to add insult to injury he broke surface on each occasion derisively to wave his booty in my face. At long last he had eaten his fill and we saw him streaking towards the island.

Our coloured skipper cried, 'Tank de Lord, Master, de old ruffian he be gone, now we catchum fish again.'

But his joy was shortlived. The bull was back in less than half an hour and he brought his wife and two baby seals with him. He had apparently decided to let them in on a good thing. We started home in disgust, cursing the Union Fisheries Department as we went.

Another time, an eighty-foot whale cruised slowly by. My boy John fired at him with the rook rifle and we could hear the pellet plop against his side though he could hardly have noticed it as he moved along unhurried as before. Later I heard John boasting to his envious schoolfellows up north that he 'had shot a whale'.

This little rifle helped us to elucidate a problem. It is one of the mysteries of the African continent how quickly vultures flock to a kill. There may not be a bird in sight, but within a few minutes they appear out of the sky to gather round the carcass. They cannot scent fresh meat from miles away nor can they see a dead animal from the great distances they come, especially in dense bush, yet they congregate in a very brief time.

One afternoon we stumbled on what I think is the solution. A malagasy flew overhead. John fired at it and to my surprise he brought it down. The bird fell into the sea with a splash and almost at once a distant gull, seeing the malagasy drop, came to investi-



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gate. Other gulls from further away realized that one of their number had spotted something and they followed to see.

Then more gulls realized from the movements of their friends that something was afoot and they too closed in. Soon there were nearly a hundred of them screeching around the body of the floating goose.

None of them could have scented the dead bird and only one of them had seen it fall, but here they were, crowding around. I believe that the same explanation holds in the case of vultures. There are always a number of them soaring far apart, mere specks invisible to the human eye, and should one of them see a kill lying below, he drops steeply. The next nearest vulture, perhaps a mile away, notices the other dive and, his interest aroused, he follows. Then the next and the next vultures guess from the movements of their neighbours that there is to be a feast and they likewise proceed in the same direction. In this manner the ripple spreads in an ever widening circle and the vulture population over a large area gather on the ground. Here again none of them could have scented the kill, and only one of them had actually discovered the dead animal.

I saw another curious incident. A school of killer whales came ashore. Some were high and dry, others were flapping in the shallow surf frantically attempting to follow those that were already on land.

Two young Dutch farmers living in the neighbourhood waded in and slewing some of the smaller fish around, pushed them into deeper water and headed them out to sea. But they refused to be rescued. No sooner were they left to themselves than they turned back and insisted on beaching themselves again.

Mass suicide by killers is not infrequent along our coastline. The theory is that when they are pursued by shark or other enemies they strand themselves in a panic. But I hold a different view.

In the interior of Africa legions of ants and swarms of hopper locusts will set off in a given direction. Some primordial urge starts them upon their given way and having started, no obstacle diverts them. Should a river or a veld fire bar their passage, still they press forward, only to perish.

I believe a similar law applies to killers. From some distant point, propelled by nature, they make for their destined goal and it may well be that navigational errors, due to change of wind or



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tide, deflect them from their course and when, instead of the open sea they find land ahead of them, a blind impulse still drives them on and like the ants and the locusts, they go to their doom.

We witnessed an amusing event one morning. There hung a thick blanket of fog through which we cautiously felt our way. After a while we unexpectedly ran into a space of open water lying in brilliant sunshine. The surface was calm but as always, even in good weather, the ground swells rolled in at intervals, silent and smooth as glass, though they swing a boat twenty feet high as they come.

A few miles from the coast is a lagoon inhabited by duck and as we sailed across the clear patch, two of these suddenly appeared out of the surrounding wall of mist and sat down with a splash. None of us had ever know fresh-water duck to alight on the sea, so we watched them.

For a few moments they paddled about contentedly, and it was evident that they thought they were back on one of their quiet inland pools. Then came a towering ground swell that bore them swiftly on high. When they topped the crest they looked at each other with a wild surmise and as they tobogganed to the rear gave a squawk of dismay; and rising quickly, they disappeared into the gloom, leaving us helpless with laughter.

With such diversions, False Bay has been a haven of rest from the quarrels of Parliament and a great source of interest to my boys just as Sandringham has been a sanctuary and an infinite pleasure to us all.



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# XIV

## DEPRESSION IN THE UNION AND BRITISH INTERLUDE

### I

The year 1932 was a hard one in South Africa. Twelve months before, Great Britain had left the gold standard and the Nationalists obstinately refused to follow suit. This gave rise to the most serious economic depression we have ever faced. Politically we made full use of the problem and launched a damaging attack against the Government from one end of the Union to the other.

Our public has been worked into a frenzy by so many forgotten causes in the past that I shall not linger over the Battle of the Gold Standard, but it lasted for nearly two years during which we conducted a relentless campaign. By the end of 1932 the rising tide of discontent had grown so strong that General Hertzog's government was tottering.

It had been an exciting time. I spoke at scores of meetings all over South Africa as did the rest of our Party.

Then, early in 1933, came the dramatic intervention of Mr. Justice Roos. He is dead and gone and his name is scarcely remembered to-day, but in his time he played a considerable role. I knew him and had fought him, in Parliament and out, for many years. He was an able lawyer and a jovial cynic, but he was not very wise. He had been Minister of Justice under General Hertzog's administration until, some time previously, his health failed and he took to the Bench.

Without warning he now dropped a bombshell in the Nationalist ranks, a bombshell that was to have far-reaching effects and which, incidentally, brought about a great change in my own affairs.

Suddenly he resigned his judgeship and took the field against his former chief.

Mr. Roos, though not in Parliament, controlled a *bloc* of about twenty Nationalist members in the House and if their votes were



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thrown against General Hertzog, they would inevitably bring about his downfall. And Mr. Roos approached us with a curious proposal: he said that if we undertook to make him Prime Minister, he would break the Nationalist Party for us.

I met him several times during the discussions. He looked ill and worn. There was no trace of his old genial self and he told me he knew he had only a few more years to live. He added that before he died he meant to reorganize the economic and social fabric of the Union, and bring about a united nation.

I gained the impression that his illness had unbalanced his mind and I prefer to think that, sickening for death as he was, he failed to understand the implications of his somewhat dubious plan.

At this juncture General Hertzog dropped a counter bombshell, coming forward with the suggestion that we should call a halt to our racial warfare. The fight had been going on for over twenty years without either side gaining a final verdict, and all the time South Africa was suffering. He pleaded for an amalgamation into a new central Party of which he was to be the leader and in which our Dutch and English citizens were to be equally represented.

At first we thought this was merely a ruse to stave off defeat, as it was evident that at the next General Election we would drive him out of power. But General Smuts and I and others did not like the Roos overtures for they savoured of trickery and though we were confident of success at the coming polls, we felt that this would mean a continuation of the old racial dogfight which had done so much harm.

We therefore laid the Roos-Hertzog conditions before our Party and in caucus after caucus there was heated debate. Our supporters were so embittered at the pinpricks inflicted on them during the long Nationalist régime that they were prepared to go to almost any lengths to get rid of Hertzog and his government and there was a strong desire to make terms with Mr. Roos.

We had a difficult task to dissuade them from what we saw would be a fatal course, and in the end we prevailed. What turned the day was the manner in which General Smuts rose superior to personal ambition. For the common good he was prepared to forgo the certainty of once more becoming the head of the state and his willingness to serve under Hertzog whom he had opposed for half a lifetime overcame their final difficulties. He asked the rest of us to agree to the lesser sacrifice of our own personal sentiments.



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The negotiations, the quarrels and the arguments by no means went as smoothly or as quickly as might appear. There was tension throughout the country. The press raved and there was dissension and disunion in our Party, and I suppose the Nationalist counsels were equally divided. It was an uneasy, troublesome period, but a road was found and our 'Fusion' Party, as it was called, came into being.

A section of extremist Afrikaner opinion under Dr. Malan hived off into a separate group and a section of extremist British opinion under Colonel Stallard did likewise; but the balance, representing the moderates, ranged themselves behind General Hertzog and General Smuts.

The charge of opportunism was levelled at us but as for the South African Party, we stand absolved. By entering into a compact with the Nationalists we deliberately gave up certain victory for the sake of peace and co-operation between the two white races of South Africa.

Now came the question of constituting the new government. Under the Concordat, General Hertzog was to be Prime Minister with the right to nominate half the Cabinet and General Smuts was to be deputy Prime Minister with the right to nominate the other half.

Our final deliberations had shifted from Cape Town to Pretoria and one afternoon General Smuts phoned me to come to his farm. I motored out and found him in the wood and iron shack he has lived in for twenty-five years. He told me he was at his wits' end over the formation of his share of the new Cabinet. There were so many claimants and only five vacancies.

I saw at once how his mind was running and I said that he was not to consider me. I had followed him, man and boy, in peace and war, for over thirty years and I was content to serve under him as a private in the ranks.

He appeared relieved and after adding and deleting various possibles on a list he had before him he showed me his final Cabinet selection which did not include my name. He seemed unhappy about it, but I gave him an assurance that my loyalty to him did not depend on Cabinet rank and that he could rely on my unswerving support.

On this note we said good-bye. As I climbed into my car I thought that he and Mrs. Smuts gazed at me rather wistfully and



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I sensed that they felt I had, in a way, been dropped overboard. I was quite content, however, but as I started off he bade me promise that I would drive to Mr. Patrick Duncan's office in Johannesburg to tell him what we had decided on.

As Mr. Patrick Duncan had been a member of our Cabinet long ago, and as I knew what a high opinion General Smuts had of him, I did as he asked me. I saw Mr. Duncan and explained the position to him. He later became Sir Patrick Duncan, the first South African Governor General of the Union, but I was never able to find out from him or from General Smuts what took place between them. Later in the evening my telephone rang and General Smuts was at the other end. He said he did not feel he could leave me out of the new Cabinet and that I was to be in Pretoria next day to be sworn in as a member of the Government.

I was not eager, for I had experience of the endless worries and uncertainties of a South African portfolio, but to me General Smuts was the law and I accepted office. That was more than eight years ago and I have not regretted the decision.

Fusion broke down at long last, but it has at any rate proved that with give and take on both sides, English and Dutch can work together in good fellowship in this country.

## II

I took over the portfolio of Lands that I held nine years before and I had charge of Irrigation and Forestry, fascinating posts involving a maximum of travel.

As soon as the new Cabinet was formed, we held a General Election to test public opinion and we conducted a lightning campaign. For the first time in my life I appeared on the same platform with General Hertzog and I even stumped the Western Transvaal with General Kemp whom we had imprisoned in 1914.

South Africa overwhelmingly endorsed us and from now onward for more than six years the old South African Party and the Nationalists worked together and we began to think that unity was at length achieved.

I was returned unopposed for the Low Country and my wife, who is more politically-minded than I am, was returned for Parktown North, an important constituency of Johannesburg. She



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was the first woman Member of Parliament in South Africa. The elections being over and won, Parliament met at Capetown in a brief session and then, as when I first became a Minister, I set out to visit a portion of my kingdom as yet unvisited.

I had decided to inspect the Kalahari which lay under my control. This desert lies between German South-West on the one side and the Transvaal and Southern Rhodesia on the other, a breadth of four hundred miles or so, and lengthways it stretches from the Orange River in the south to the Okavango swamps six hundred miles northward.

Much of it is good cattle country, it contains plenty of game, and there are roving tribes of bushmen, the most primitive of all human beings.

Some officials who were to accompany me went on ahead to Kuruman, the mission centre where the Moffats and David Livingstone had laboured a somewhat unfruitful vineyard in years gone by, and I followed by air. At Kuruman I had cars and a lorry with petrol and water, and sending the plane back to Pretoria, we started off.

Using the dry bed of the Kuruman River, we travelled for two hundred miles to its confluence with the Molopo, another dead river that flows at rare intervals after heavy rains, perhaps twice in a century.

In this country of eternal sand we ploughed along at about ten miles an hour. After days of heavy going we reached a point where the Nosop and the Oup, two more fossil rivers, join together, and now we lumbered up the Oup to Mata-Mata on the south-west frontier.

Some time before, the Trustees of the Kruger Park had set aside a triangle of ground in this area, a million acres in extent, as a sanctuary for gemsbok (*Oryx Gazelli*) and the true hartebeest (*Bubalis Cama*). These varieties had been nearly exterminated by nomad poachers and by bushmen hunters.

We had selected the land by looking at the map, for none of us had ever visited this part of the world before; indeed, very few people in the Union had ever heard of it. Now I pushed cross-country from the Oup to inspect the Reserve and I was the first of the Board to see it—a waste of dunes which we navigated by compass. We developed a technique of our own for crossing the sandhills. The secret is to deflate one's tyres to half strength and



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never to attempt a dune on the slant; to accelerate and run straight ahead so that the impetus carries the car eight to ten feet upwards and the engine stalls; then to go back along the ruts the wheels have made and make another charge that carries us a short length beyond the first attempt. Continuing the process the rise is topped at last. It is a cruel strain on mechanism and chassis, but we crossed a long succession of dunes in this way, and went right through the Reserve in a few days at an all-over pace of about two miles per hour.

We saw gemsbok and hartebeest and an occasional bushman running at the sight of these strange monsters invading his ancestral hunting-grounds; and we put up several Kalahari lion, a smaller and less yellowed species than those of the Transvaal.

I had arranged for a camel patrol to await us and here again, I learned something new about lion. We emerged on the Nosop River one evening and as we pitched our tents I was surprised to see the camel drivers hobble their animals and turn them into the bush for the night. We had seen a lion slinking at dusk and to me it seemed wanton cruelty to send the camels thus helpless into the dark, but the drivers were easy. They said a lion will never attack a camel, hobbled or otherwise, that a lion only attacks from the rear, and as a camel always faces round, they are not molested. My own belief is that lion cannot bear their musty smell; but at all events our camels grazed unharmed. I rode a camel now and then but on the whole I prefer to walk.

Having inspected the Reserve, we continued, travelling up the bed of the Nosop River to a point shown on the map as Union's End. Here we found a tribe of half-breeds that had been marooned for over two years, a subsection of Simon Kooper's nation, about a hundred strong. They had come to Union's End to hunt, but a drought had cut them off and they had been obliged to remain at this spot ever since, for here was the only water within a hundred and twenty miles. Luckily for them the South African Government had put down a borehole for our troops during the 1915 campaign. The hole was a hundred and seventy feet deep and as there was no pump or windmill, the only way they could reach the water was by letting down a gallon paraffin tin at the end of a long line of gemsbok riems; it was a full-time job and they worked in relays night and day. Had the thong broken the tin would have fallen down and blocked the borehole, and all of them would have



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perished. They had never seen a motor-car. I offered to send back for lorries to evacuate them but they were too terrified of these strange vehicles so I left them there. I learned afterwards that they got out in safety with the next rains.

Animals in these parts do not drink, for there is no surface water. They obtain moisture from the Tsama melon and other herbage.

As for lion and other carnivora, they are said to drink the blood of their prey, but according to the bushmen they quench their thirst from the liquid in the large intestine of the beasts they kill. I was told that hunters in the Kalahari find enough water in a gemsbok's paunch to have a drink and a wash and that once they become used to it, fresh water is insipid and tasteless to them.

As we returned down the river we came on two honey badgers. We have a Dutch saying, 'tough as a badger', and I would add 'brave as a badger', for as we passed them I saw a pair of cubs, the size of hedgehogs. I was on the driving seat of the water lorry at the time and the badgers thought we had designs on their offspring. To them the lorry must have looked about twenty times the size a mastodon did to a palaeolithic hunter, yet they were unafraid. They charged forward in defence of their brood and the valorous creatures actually bit and hacked into our tyres, squealing with rage the while. I ordered my driver not to injure them and the brave creatures trotted off in triumph to collect their young.

We now made for Upington, a village on the north bank of the Orange. A prolonged drought was working havoc on both sides of the river and I went to investigate. In order to reach Upington we ploughed over two hundred miles of barren country. We went by Rietfontein, the most desolate outpost of Southern Africa, and we went by Haksteen Pan, thirty miles long with a floor so smooth and hard that at sixty miles an hour our cars raised no dust and left no visible tracks. The effects of the drought were terrible. The Hottentots who inhabit this area exist at the best of times on a mere fringe of life for this is one of the toughest lands on earth. We found them living on locusts and roots and digging for ants. I asked one of them how they were faring and he said in Dutch, 'Sir, we Hottentots can live on wind and sun, but the whites are getting hell.'

The Orange River was a row of stagnant pools. Hundreds of European farmers had moved to the river in search of water and in search of such little grazing as was left on its banks.



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We crossed to the south side and hurried along via Goodhouse, Pella-Pella, and other places unmarked on maps, and by a wide sweep we struck the river again at Vioolsdrift. All along our route dead cattle and sheep and horses met our eyes and our nostrils; it was a sad journey.

At Vioolsdrift a number of families had sought refuge. They had come from their stricken farms, for here at any rate was water to drink, and such of their animals as were left to them could gain sustenance of a kind by feeding on the willows and reeds.

When we came among them down a narrow gorge debouching on the river, they were nearing starvation. Wherever a tree was left, a whole family was camped for shelter and like the Hottentots we had passed, they too were digging for ants and snaring jackals for food. They were a brave hardy people among whom I had lived in the days of the guerrilla war, and I knew their fine qualities.

The menfolk had pathetically begun to dig a canal to bring what little water there was on to flat ground, where they hoped to sow wheat and maize, but their levels were wrong, and a jutting crag had defeated their labours. Ruin was staring them in the face.

I despatched one of my cars to civilization and in less than a fortnight engineers arrived and within a month three hundred men were at work building a dam across the river and constructing a canal. To-day, where I had found a hopeless starving community there are ten thousand acres of fields and gardens under irrigation, and scores of comfortable homesteads and smiling families. It cost the taxpayer of the Union ninety thousand pounds but this settlement, conjured from the desert, is a tangible thing I have achieved.

Later I received an artless address. It read:

Hon. Sir. We the undersigned render our thanks. You promised to help us and we doubted. But the marks of your car were still in the sand when your workmen arrived to build this dam, and now we are saved.'

Then followed the signatures of many people.

I was criticized in Parliament during the next session, but I had helped a brave community whom I learned to respect in days gone by, and I have no regrets.

From here we went further south to Springbokfontein, the place I had helped to capture in 1902. In the village cemetery I found



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the graves of Stewart and van Couvorden, the two young soldiers I had killed. From the inscription on their headstones they had fallen on the 1st of April and not on my birthday as I state in my book *Commando*; but it was easy to lose count in those times.

It must be unusual for a man to look upon the graves of those fallen by his hand. I had experienced this once before, at the grave of the spy whose execution I have elsewhere described.

I now travelled west to pick up the railway line and so returned to Pretoria; from there I flew to Windhoek to discuss the Vioolsdrift scheme with the authorities, as some of the land I was putting under water lay on their side of the Orange River. I was escorted by two other machines, for our route was across uninhabited desert and it was advisable to have accompanying planes to report forced landings or other mishaps. At Windhoek I entered into an agreement with the Administration and then we flew back. We had come on a roundabout course via Upington and Keetmanshoop but on the return journey I decided to take the direct way. This had only been attempted once before, by Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, our flying ace who commanded the Union Air Force.

We purchased hand mirrors to flash our position to a rescue party should we come down in the desert. However, all went well. For nine hours we winged it over the most forbidding expanse I had ever seen and so we flew the 'Great Thirst'.

## III

Having been in the grip of a terrible drought for two years, South Africa now suffered from equally disastrous floods. With us it is always feast or famine. The land is parched and thirst-stricken or the heavens are loosed upon us.

I have spoken of the Drought Relief Bill which we had to turn into a flood assistance measure, and my father once told me of how he rode through a forest at Knysna when he came on an old Boer lady standing disconsolate by the road. Halting to inquire what was amiss she replied, 'Oh, sir, the elephants and the grubs got into my fields last night.' The largest of quadrupeds and the smallest of insects had combined to ravage her crops, and this is typical of how extremes meet out here.

Thus it was now. From lands lately parched, with flocks and herds lying dead for want of water, reports came in from



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every direction of heavy rains and losses of human beings and livestock.

This was early in 1934. I had gone to the Cape with my family to await the approaching session of Parliament and on reaching home one evening after a long day's fishing on the Bay with my two boys, there were telegrams to say that the Orange River was in spate and that the people on the islands below Upington were in grave peril.

When I was formerly Minister of Lands I had had a survey of these islands made and I had placed the settlers there. Now they were in jeopardy, so I went to see things for myself. Our Air Force had an old Wapiti two-seater stationed at Capetown and I requisitioned it. The pilot was Lieutenant Viljoen, and I took off at daybreak next day. In six hours we were approaching the Orange.

I had known this sector of the river for more than thirty years but what I saw now was different. Instead of narrow streams and channels meandering among the islands, a mighty torrent more then three miles wide was flowing down with only the tops of the larger islands above water. The smaller ones were drowned out.

I landed at Upington and collected what information I could. Bridges were under water, the railway line had gone and telegraph and telephone communications were broken. No one had news of the islanders. There was a dilapidated motor launch that had served as a ferry and I asked for volunteers to man it. Of the six men who offered themselves, four were local Jewish traders. Each of us took an inflated inner tube of a motor tyre as lifebelt and we discarded most of our clothing, for the water ran rough and turbulent.

After a dangerous passage we made Cannon Island. The inhabitants cheered as we came up. Their homes and crops were gone but they were in no immediate danger as the floods could not reach the higher levels. Then we visited the other islands that were not submerged. On one of these, a few square yards alone still showed above the waters. On this the two occupants had drawn a wagon; on the wagon was a kitchen table, and on the table stood two chairs upon which they sat philosophically smoking their pipes. Neither of them could swim and when I asked them what would happen if there was a further rise, they shrugged their shoulders and one of them said in Dutch 'then we'll go down with the others'.



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I invited them on board, but after inspecting our craft they refused. They were wise, for shortly after leaving them we got into rapids and our ship sank.

Fortunately we were close to a bank and with difficulty and good luck we managed to wade ashore. It was nearly dark, we were drenched to the skin and most of our clothes and other belongings had gone down. So, cold and hungry we cowered together for warmth on the sand spit. The nearest mainland was a mile and a half away and in between raged a torrent on which it seemed no boat could live.

But word must have gone forth of our plight, for towards the small hours of the morning the headlights of motor-cars began to appear and it was obvious that they were trying to locate us. The roar of the waters prevented our shouts from reaching them, but now we had experience of the strange system of log-swimming that is practised by the Hottentots along the river. They take a six foot log. At the upper end they drive in a stout wooden peg to serve as a handle and with this crude raft they fearlessly enter the water no matter how strong the current. Sprawled across, one hand grasping the peg and one leg encircling the log, with their free leg and free arm they propel themselves.

As we sat shivering in the dark we heard a shout, and a dripping figure appeared among us. It was a Hottentot sent by the District Magistrate. Hearing that we had not returned he collected as many log-swimmers as he could and he ordered them into the river to search the islands.

Before dusk I had looked across the heaving waters and I did not like what I had seen. Submerged reefs broke the current into great waves from ten to fifteen feet high and to plunge into this in broad daylight requires a stout heart; but the Hottentot swimmers precariously astride their logs, did not hesitate to make the passage in the dark.

The man who reached us made light of his feat and when we had told him what we had to tell, he re-entered the stream and was swallowed into the night. He made the return journey in safety for not long after daybreak we saw a large boat navigated by more Hottentots approaching us from above. We watched them anxiously, but as the boat was coming downstream and not across the current it had an easier passage and ultimately they were able to take us off.



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The home journey was difficult, but after a struggle we got in amid enthusiastic plaudits from the crowd that had collected to watch the rescue operations.

I was told that these swimming logs are passed from father to son like family heirlooms and I heard of a European who tried to chop one for firewood being half murdered before he was extricated.

A car owner raced me back to Upington and I planned to drop supplies on the islands. We manufactured parachutes from sheets and tablecloths and we attached tins with food of various kinds. Loaded with these I made several journeys over the stricken area and in every case I was able to drop the bombs with accuracy and saw men and women and children rushing to retrieve them, waving their arms in greeting as we flew by.

Having provisioned them as well as I could, I went down the river next day to see what had happened to the construction works at Vioolsdrift.

We passed Cannon Island and the other islands as before, then down to Keimoes and Kakamas where I could see immense damage. Soon after crossing Kakamas we saw a great pillar of smoke in the sky. It was spray rising from the Aughrabies Falls. We circled round. Above the Falls the flooded river was three or four miles broad, then the water entered the ravine and leaped into the canyon, five hundred feet below.

It was a stupendous sight and I believe that my pilot and I were the first men to see the Aughrabies in flood, for normally it is impossible to get near during the rains. My record for swimming up the gorge years ago also holds.

We continued down the river and after a while we were over Goodhouse. I had been at this place not long before and on that occasion old Carl Weidner had subjected me to a lecture on his favourite topic—that South Africa was drying up.

As we passed overhead I could see his orchards and fields under water and only the roof of his homestead was visible. The poor old fellow was standing in his shirtsleeves surveying the havoc from a rise, so I dropped him a message: 'Terribly sorry, but you said South Africa was drying up.'

The note fell almost at his feet and I saw him pick it up. He read it and then he shook his fist at the plane; but when I met him long after, he chuckled and agreed that the joke was on him.



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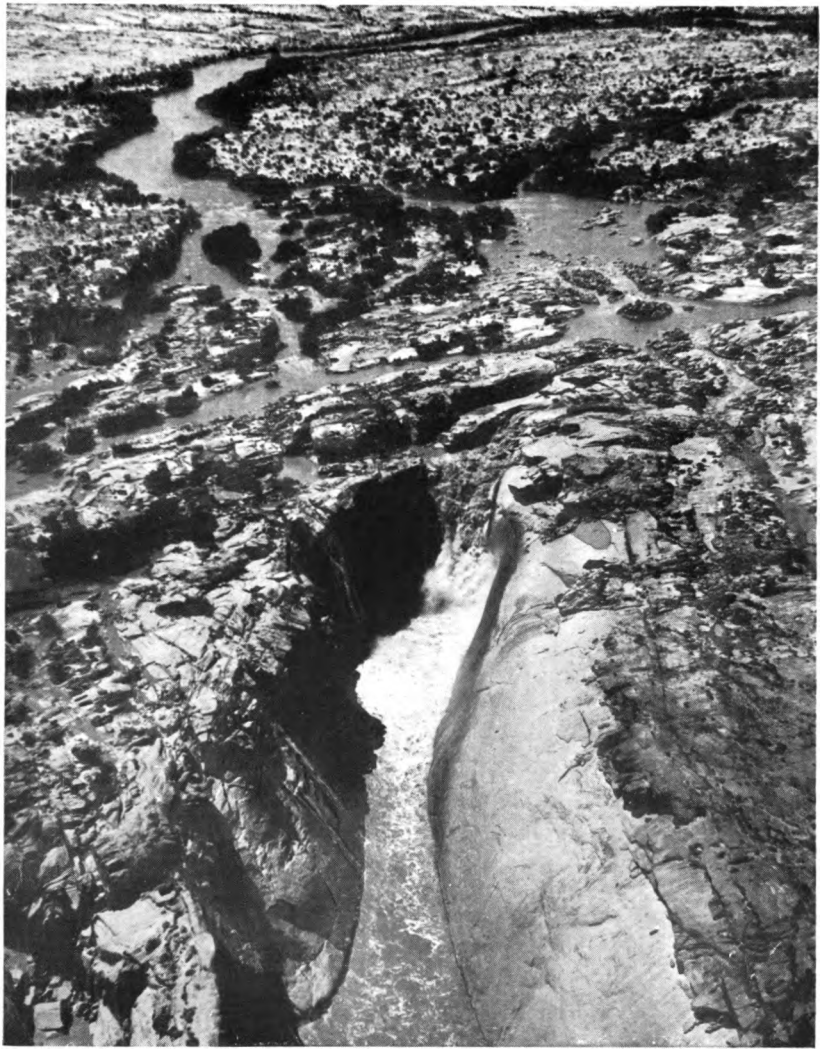

THE AUGHRABIES FALLS IN FLOOD

In the foreground is the gorge up which the author swam, and in the centre are the falls. They have a sheer drop of five hundred feet, and the aeroplane had to fly at a great height to avoid the air pockets caused by the suction of the huge columns of water.

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From here we continued to Vioolsdrift. The engineers had received timely warning and they had succeeded in dragging most of the tractors and machinery out of harm's way. Among the white tents on the hill I could see the workmen gazing at the progress of the floods and here again I left a greeting.

Beyond Vioolsdrift we flew over the most jagged country I have seen in my life—serrated mountains that stood up like shark's teeth and our engine selected this moment to do frightening things. There came a series of bangs and knocks which felt as if the machine were being torn to pieces. I was in communication with Lieut. Viljoen by earphone and I heard him say, 'Beg pardon sir, engine trouble.' This was only too obvious and a moment later he said, 'Sir, I'm afraid we will have to jump for it.'

The parachutes we wore in those days were bulky cumbersome things and I had unbuckled and thrown mine into the narrow tunnel to the rear of the cockpit. It was not easy to crawl down that restricted passage but in a matter of seconds I went on hands and knees and fished it out. The knocking and shaking of the engine was unabated and I confess that the thought of leaping out on to the forbidding range below was uninviting. I had replaced my earphone askew so the pilot's voice was faint, but I heard him tell me not to go overboard until he held up his hand. In spite of the jolting cylinders, the propeller was still going and Lieut. Viljoen was nosing upward. He climbed until the engine gave out and in the comparative silence that followed he telephoned to say that he thought we would make it. I did not know what he meant, but looking ahead I saw, far away, a glint of the Atlantic Ocean. He made skilful use of our height and he handled his machine in such a manner that after a tense half hour he glided her safely on to the coast.

We were lucky, for besides making a good landing, we found ourselves close to Alexander Bay, the State diamond diggings to which I made earlier reference. Soon the manager of the works and his staff were on the scene and instead of having to leap from an aeroplane on to a remote and barren desert we found a warm welcome and comfortable quarters.

The engine of our plane was so badly damaged through an oil leakage that it was abandoned and only the fuselage was taken back for salvage.

While awaiting the arrival of a relief machine I had time to



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inspect the diggings. They are enclosed in a double ring of wire fences, twelve feet high, lit by arc lamps at night and patrolled all day by armed men.

In this desolate area, diamonds to the value of sixteen million pounds have been unearthed and production at the same rate can go on for another century.

When finally a plane was sent to my rescue I was flown to Capetown. John and Michael were at the aerodrome to meet me. They said it was unfair, I was always having adventures without them.

At this time I happened to visit the trout hatcheries near Capetown. I found that in addition to trout, a consignment of Black Bass had been imported from Canada and the fish were thriving. I was told that they breed in dams and stagnant waters, but when I suggested trying them up north the Curator said he had made several attempts to send fingerlings by rail but in each case they had died.

I procured a dozen bass, each some three inches long, and putting them into a carboy I flew them up to Johannesburg next day in a Wapiti. They were all alive and well when we landed and I had them placed in one of the municipal ponds. They have increased so prolifically since then that I have caused every government irrigation work in the Transvaal and Free State to be stocked with their progeny.

## IV

The 1934 session of Parliament was dull. From my notes I gather that there were long debates over some recondite constitutional issue as to whether the Crown of England was divisible or indivisible. The jingo element raved, but to me it was as divorced from reality as the medieval disputes about the number of angels that could stand on the point of a needle or the abstractions of the Holy Trinity; so I fished on the Bay.

On 27th March of this year my father, Francis William Reitz, aged ninety, died, full of years and of honour. He was decreed a state funeral and General Smuts and General Hertzog were among his pall bearers. A mighty throng stood bowed in the streets of Capetown as his cortège went by.

At the conclusion of the session we returned to Pretoria and



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between spells of departmental duties I went on various journeys.

I paid another visit to Zululand, taking my younger brother Jack with me. At the age of twelve he had been at the siege of Ladysmith during the Boer War in 1899. Now he was Mayor of Bloemfontein and a Member of the Free State Provincial Council.

After a long journey, meeting deputations and listening to grievances, we reached the Umfolosi River and here I had a Waco plane awaiting me as I intended flying over the papyrus delta I had first inspected when the sugar planters dynamited the barrier in 1921.

My brother had never flown before and when I asked him to join me he refused. He said, 'I promised Billy (his wife) I would not fly without her consent, and I must keep my word.'

These were still the days when to go aloft was looked on as a perilous undertaking and before starting friends shook hands and said good-bye in mournful voices, hoping for the best. But I could see that Jack was eager so I coaxed him inside the machine and before he could change his mind we were up.

We circled the swamp, then we turned inland over the Umfolosi reserve, seeing buffalo and white rhino and other game. Then we made for the coast and as a Waco can sit down on a tablecloth, we looked for a clear patch near the beach and came safely to earth.

That evening I met a young cub reporter and prevailed on him to send a press telegram to Bloemfontein to say that 'Mr. Jack Reitz, our Mayor and Provincial Councillor, has been assisting his brother the Minister of Lands, in an aerial survey of the Umfolosi delta.'

He entered into the spirit of the thing, and in three or four days a copy of the *Bloemfontein Friend* was in my post. There was a headlined account of our trip, with prominent mention of Jack's doings, so I left the journal on a table in our tent. Presently he walked in and seeing his favourite paper he began to read the hometown news.

I watched him. As he reached the item about himself he sat up with a jerk and a broad smile illumined his countenance. He slapped his thigh and looking at me he exclaimed, 'By God, I don't know what Billy will do about this, but I would like to hear what those fellows at the Coffee House will say when they hear of it.'



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At Bloemfontein, he and his cronies met every morning to gossip and he knew that they would regard his exploit as a seven days' wonder; for flying had not yet reached that peaceful township and anyone who had been in the air was looked on with respect.

I spent the balance of my trip to Zululand, flying to various places. I went to St. Lucia Bay, Sordwana, Sibaya, and to my old haunt at Indumu where I found the hippo largely increased since I had turned their lake into a sanctuary fourteen years ago.

Then, leaving my brother and the rest of my party to work their way back by road, I flew to Pretoria. In the next three months I twice flew over the wild country that lies towards the Limpopo and over the river system of the Njeleli and Pafuri, a region South Africans had scarcely heard of at that time. I saw elephant and much other game. I looked down on the fastness of the Zoutpansbergen and on the lake of Fundudzi which the Bavenda natives consider to be sacred.

I now took up a project I had long considered. When first I was a member of the Union Cabinet, I was shown documents in the Irrigation Department with regard to a scheme originally mooted by Mr. Cecil Rhodes. He wanted to build a dam across the Vaal River at Warrenton, near Kimberley, by means of which its waters could be diverted to the lower-lying area of the Harts.

In 1922 I sent out survey parties to investigate the possibilities, but the ensuing change of Government brought the scheme to nothing. Now that I was in power again I took it up afresh. I had lived in the Northern Free State before the Great War and I was intimately acquainted with the upper course of the Vaal River. It seemed to me that instead of damming the Vaal at Warrenton, as Mr. Rhodes intended, we should build a mighty weir four hundred miles above to impound ten times the water he had dreamed of. By running this down the bed of the river to Warrenton and thence to the Harts we could irrigate a hundred and twenty thousand acres of soil now lying useless in the Kalahari desert.

Much of this ground belonged to the Batlapins, a tribe of Sechuana under the paramount Chief Mankorane, and I had to obtain their consent. So I travelled west and met the Chief and his counsellors. As I appeared before them they stood respectfully, each man holding up his arm in salute crying 'Poola-poola' which in their language means 'rain-rain'. In a drought-stricken country rain is like God to them so 'Poola' is their cry.



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I addressed the headman and when I pointed to the baking sands and undertook to bring them running water they laughed, for no man had in his lifetime seen running water here.

Nevertheless I made a treaty under which they granted me the land and I journeyed back. On the second day east, there rolled towards us a wall of brick-red dust, a thousand feet high. Nature stood still: the birds fell silent and there came a hush. The headlights of our cars penetrated only a few feet and for twenty minutes we fought for breath.

Then the curtain passed and in its wake followed a cloudburst which in a few seconds turned every runnel into a torrent. We were delayed for many hours and as I watched the tide recede I saw a curious thing. Rain had not fallen in these parts for six years but now on the edge of the water there sat dozens of frogs, so tenuous as to be almost transparent, and they croaked away vigorously. How they had survived, and whence they came, were matters beyond me.

On my return to Pretoria I persuaded my reluctant colleagues that the work had to be constructed, and in due course I piloted an enabling Bill through Parliament. I was hotly attacked and the press said I was squandering the nation's money on a whim of my own; but to-day there stands an inland sea, ninety miles long, with a coastline of four hundred miles, and down on the Harts are thousands of settlers making a living where before was only a waste of desert.

Also I made good my promise to the Batlapins, for water now flows where no water had run in the memory of man.

The Vaal-Harts project has cost the Union six million pounds. It is the largest irrigation scheme in the Southern hemisphere, and here, too, I have no regrets.

I made other flights on official business. On one of these General Smuts was a fellow passenger. We landed at a small village in the Karroo where the Mayor and Town Councillors invited us to an al fresco breakfast on the aerodrome.

The General was in good humour and he told delightful stories of the days when he and I had raided these parts during the Boer War. I thought I would spin them a yarn of those times too, so I recounted the tale of the ambush in 1901 when General Smuts had his horse shot under him during the first weeks of our invasion of the Cape Colony. I said that a young British officer had examined



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the General's wallets and found a Greek Testament among its contents. Scanning the book he was heard to exclaim, 'I wonder why this Boer officer is learning Pitman's shorthand?' I sat back for applause, but I drew a blank and it was borne in on me that neither the Mayor nor his Councillors had ever seen Greek script or Pitman's shorthand.

I found time to take my boys to Sandringham for our annual camping and we went into the Kruger National Park to see the progress of the Letaba causeway. We met two enormous bull elephants beside the road and I pulled up within a few yards of them. Immediately beyond was one of our Board posters nailed to a tree, with the notice, 'Beware of the elephant.' Michael leaned across and in a hoarse whisper inquired, 'Daddy, *how* does one beware of elephant?' As the use of firearms is not allowed in the Park I didn't know then and I don't know now. Fortunately the great beasts shuffled off into the bush and we were free to continue our journey.

## V

In August 1934 the Government of Southern Rhodesia invited my wife and myself to Salisbury. We travelled via the Limpopo River and the Zimbabwe ruins and thence east to the Melsetter escarpment from where we turned through Umtali and so reached the Rhodesian capital after an interesting journey. We were guests of the State and we were royally entertained with banquets and balls and their traditional hospitality.

I opened an agricultural show, made speeches at many functions, then we started for the Victoria Falls.

After a long run we came to Bulawayo by midnight. We had left at five a.m. that morning and looked forward gratefully to rest. As we were having a final cup of tea at an hotel, a policeman brought me a pencilled note telephoned by the Rhodesian Governor from Salisbury.

It said that our son Michael was lying in hospital at Johannesburg desperately injured as the result of an accident.

The news had been wired from Pretoria, but as we had already left Salisbury when it arrived and no one knew exactly where we could be found, they had communicated with every telephone centre and every police station along our route. Outlying towns



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and villages were asked to watch for us and practically the whole of Rhodesia was on the lookout. I can never adequately express my gratitude for the trouble they went to.

We started south at once. We travelled all through the night and as we tore along, policemen and officials at telephone booths and post offices flagged us with news of Michael's condition. What they told us was not reassuring: 'Unconscious, but there is hope.'

We made West Nicholson and we passed Beit Bridge on the Limpopo towards sunrise. Stopping only to refuel we hurried on. The Union Government too was kind. At intervals men stood beside the road to say our boy was still alive as we raced across Northern and Central Transvaal and when we reached the outskirts of Johannesburg that evening, after a record run, Colonel Baston, of the police, stopped us. Our hearts sank for we thought he bore evil tidings, but he had come to show his sympathy and he said he had visited the hospital and that Michael was still alive.

Jaded and weary we pulled up at the children's hospital after dark. Michael was in a critical condition. His skull was fractured and his face was battered to pulp and he had been unconscious for two days. Next morning he came to. His eyes slowly opened and he stared bewilderedly around. Gradually he recognized his mother and myself. Then he said, 'Will you give me a watch if I recover?'

I am thankful to say he got that watch. He made slow progress but in a month he was out of danger.

My eldest brother Hjalmar came to see him. He stared at the boy's mangled face, all swathed in plaster and lint, then he looked at me and said, 'As Michael resembled you before the accident, any alteration must be an improvement.' I was so happy about Mike's progress that I swallowed the insult.

## VI

Before the end of the year I made journeys by land and sea and plane, fighting by-elections, attending social functions, and dealing with many problems.

I had one amusing trip. The leader of our political opposition was Dr. Malan, a tight-lipped Covenanter with no sense of humour. I heard that he was to speak at an election meeting at Heilbron, in the Northern Free State where I had lived for many



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years, so I collected a bundle of leaflets containing unfavourable reference to him and his followers and got into an aeroplane. I timed my visit to a nicety, for as I circled overhead he was addressing his supporters on the show ground. Taking careful aim I dropped the literature in such a manner that the pamphlets fluttered straight down on his audience. They thought these were from their own party and there was a scramble to pick them up.

I saw them reading the bulletins and then flinging them away in disgust and I crowed at the old bigot's discomfiture. It was an undignified trick but we carried the seat by a large majority.

Towards the end of 1934 I changed portfolios. Thus far I had been Minister of Lands, and General Kemp had been Minister of Agriculture. Owing to the exacting nature of the task his health broke down and I lightheartedly agreed to take over from him. As Minister of Lands I had occupied an interesting and difficult post but I soon discovered how much more troublesome an inheritance I had now assumed.

Everything was rotten in the State of Denmark. Maize prices stood at zero, wheat had slumped to below production cost, fruit and citrus industries were in the doldrums, co-operative societies clamoured for help and tobacco-planters, cattle-breeders, and dairy farmers demanded the impossible. It was like a lawsuit in hell and the unfortunate Minister of Agriculture was expected to work miracles. I began to realize why my colleague had cracked up and the task nearly undid me too; but this was not yet.

The 1935 Parliamentary Session opened in January. I introduced a Bill that I count unto myself for righteousness. I had long been watching the export of our smaller wild birds to Japan and the East. They were mostly snared in the Transvaal Low Country and I found that nearly eighty per cent of them died from terror or heartbreak before they reached the ships. Even the railway porters cried out at the shame of it.

I brought in a Bill to end this cruel traffic. The farmers opposed me. They said the birds would increase under the protection of my Bill and endanger their crops, but I fought it through the House and to-day the whole of South Africa is a sanctuary in which no wild bird may be captured or caged; a matter wherein we stand ahead of the rest of the world.

Then I went on stump to East London where the ultra-British



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section howled me down. They had an association called the 'New Guard' whose purpose was to champion British interests in the Union. Though I had served in the Great War and had shed my blood in France I was roundly told that I was a Dutchman and they would have none of me. When the meeting broke up I called out, 'Gentlemen, you will apologize to me for this some day' and there came the answering shout, 'Never, never, you are a traitor.' Time has brought its revenge.

I ran down to Sandringham with John and Michael for our yearly camping, and I satisfied them at last, for I took them on a hunt and we shot two big lion after an exciting chase.

Also, we climbed up the slopes of the Drakensberg escarpment and there I selected a piece of land more beautiful, in my eyes, than anything in the country. It has a crystal clear mountain torrent of its own, it has flower-carpeted forests and from the rim one looks down a mighty gorge and almost the whole of the Low Country lies stretched beyond.

I purchased the ground and I had it surveyed and registered in my name. If ever dreams come true, I hope to spend the evening of my days on 'Forest Glade', as I have called it.

Here are extracts from my notebook for the next two months:

Flew to Capetown and thence by car to inspect irrigation scheme in the North-West. Back by air through heavy storms and thunderclouds.

To Warrenton, Kimberley and Douglas on official business.

To Upington, Griquatown and other centres in the Kalahari addressing political meetings.

By air to Uitenhage, near the south coast, to take part in a by-election. Our candidate successful.

Flew over the Addo Forest to see the elephant. Back to Pretoria in 4 hours and 45 minutes. Met deputations plus job hunters and people with insoluble conundrums and grievances.

To the N.W. Transvaal. Travelled up along the Matlabas River to its junction with the Limpopo.

Along the Magol River into the Waterbergen. For nearly a hundred miles we passed swarms of locusts whose ravages will be blamed on me as locust extermination is part of my job.

To Durban; to the Western Transvaal; to Bloemfontein to attend a Party Congress.



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And so it went on, with the opening of a few agricultural meetings and other functions thrown in for good measure.

## VII

This year I had another pleasant surprise.

The Empire Parliamentary Association is a body which every Member of Parliament in the Commonwealth is entitled to join. It sponsors journeys of goodwill to different parts of the Empire and for 1935, Great Britain was the venue. All the Dominions and India were asked to send delegates. Each Parliament elected its own representatives and our House nominated six. I was to accompany them as leader and I was nothing loath, for I had not been overseas since the Great War.

I travelled to England by air. With my private secretary, Mr. Cooper, who accompanied me on most journeys, we started off. We went via Broken Hill in Northern Rhodesia, thence by Mpika and Mbeya across the African jungle and so, via Iringa, Dodoma and Moshi, where I had campaigned of old. We flew by the peaks of Kilimanjaro to Nairobi, seeing much big game below.

From Nairobi we went to the Great Lakes and down the Nile. At Bor we circled a large herd of elephant. Some of them were swimming or wading the river, only their trunks showing above the water. We landed at Khartoum, and at Luxor, and we viewed tombs and temples and vanished pomps of yesterday.

In Cairo, museums and Coptic churches and the El ~~Ashras~~ Azhar University took several days of our time. At the University the students learn thousands of *surahs* from the Koran and nothing else. We 'did' the Pyramids where an Egyptian youth offered me beads and scarabs for sale. I asked him whether they came from Birmingham, but he smilingly said, 'No sir, dey is from Czechoslovakia.'

We were invited to the Palace where ~~Prince~~ Hassanein Pasha received us. He had accompanied Rosita Forbes to the Kufra oasis out in the western desert.

The 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers, the Battalion I had commanded in France, lay in garrison on the Suez Canal and I was invited to inspect them at Ismailia. I went by fast military plane with a fighter escort and we flew the Delta in less than an hour. I was met on the aerodrome by what I took to be a second lieutenant from the stars on his shoulders. He was a cheery little fellow and as we



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drove along in his car we cracked jokes and I dug him in the ribs at a particularly good story he told. When we reached barracks a guard of honour turned out to salute him and I found that he was Lieutenant-General Sir Timothy Pile, Commander-in-Chief of the Near East.

I had slipped up on the new insignia of rank, for crossed swords to denote a general had been abolished since my time. However, Sir Timothy and I got along like a house on fire.

The Scots Fusiliers treated me regally, with parades and a march-past and a regimental banquet. It was midsummer north of the Equator and I spent hours every day swimming in the Canal; and as I swam, Italian troopships glided by, for Mussolini had started on his Abyssinian adventure.

At the conclusion of my visit I was flown back to Cairo and Mr. Cooper and I resumed our journey. We stopped at Alexandria for a night. Sitting at a club overlooking the harbour with some friends, we were shown King Fuad's yacht at anchor in the roadway.

They told us that some months previously the King had decided to sail for Malta. Ten days later the yacht came back. They had been unable to raise the island and the commander of the yacht said, 'Malta *mafish*, there is no such place.'

From Alexandria we went by flying boat across the Mediterranean via Crete where we landed; to Athens; then to Brindisi on the Italian coast and by rail, skirting the Adriatic Sea to Turin. Everywhere walls and houses were placarded with fascist slogans about a greater Italy, and soldiers were marching and countermarching, but I thought the people were apathetic.

We saw the beautiful lakes of northern Italy, then crossed the Alps to Switzerland. Mr. Cooper was in the seventh heaven. He had never left Africa but he had been nurtured on Byron and Keats and Shelley and Browning and to him Italy and Switzerland and the snow-covered peaks of the Matterhorn and the Jungfrau were sheer romance. He quoted poetry all the way and I am afraid I somewhat damped his ardour by telling him of the *nil admirari* American who, when asked after his return from a tour through Switzerland what he thought of the Alps said he 'remembered having seen risin' ground on the left'.

A night-run to Paris, then by air to Croydon through fog and rain, flying blind without so much as a glimpse of the country below or of the English Channel.



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In London I found myself sumptuously installed at Grosvenor House as a guest of the State. I occupied a luxurious suite with the Union Coat-of-Arms in colours on a shield over my door.

One of my first callers was a grizzled soldierly man who turned out to be Lord Vivian whom I had last seen in our fight against the 17th Lancers in 1901 when he lay wounded among the rocks. On the strength of this he put me down as an honorary Member at Brooks, the oldest club in London, and he often dropped in for a talk.

A week later the rest of the South African and Dominion members arrived and now began a round of sightseeing and speeches and functions in the course of which we were nearly killed with kindness. Ancient Guilds entertained us in their halls and we supped from gold and silver plate that had survived the Cromwellian wars.

We attended the House of Commons and we were taken to a hundred and one places of interest. I was twice summoned to Buckingham Palace and twice I donned a top hat and a morning coat, in which unaccustomed garb I had audience of His Majesty King George V.

He told me he kept both my books at his bedside in Windsor Castle and he offered to confer on me the Distingushed Service Order. I was unable to accept this owing to a law the Nationalist Government had passed in 1926 prohibiting Union subjects from receiving decorations. I saw the Prince of Wales at St. James's Palace once or twice. He seemed more highly-strung than ever and I little dreamed that, in a measure, I was to sit in judgment on him in time to come.

There was a South African cricket team in England and already they had won two test matches. At a luncheon at Claridge's I responded to a toast and I said that I had seen a newspaper placard in the street that morning, 'Britain faces disaster.' Relations with Mussolini were strained over the Abyssinian adventure and an excited Frenchman cried out, 'My God, this means war with Italy'; but it was only the state of the cricket score!

On another occasion some thirty of us were standing about in front of Grosvenor House waiting for cars to fetch us to various points. A number of boys and girls stood around, each carrying an autograph book and a fountain pen.



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We thought the children had realized that the Elder Statesmen of the Empire were in town and we waited self-consciously for the young folk to screw up their courage to ask us for our signatures. The moments passed and still the autograph hunters kept aloof until at last a beauteous damosel emerged from the hotel. She was a film star and she was immediately surrounded by her admirers bearing books and pens on high. We climbed sheepishly into our cars.

We toured many parts of England and Scotland. In Glasgow the fruit distributing industry gave me a banquet by virtue of my being Minister of Agriculture in charge of export from South Africa. I made the usual speech, and having touched on refrigeration, marketing, packing and kindred topics I went on to tell how my father had spent his youth in Scotland and of his great love for Robert Burns. I said that he had translated many of Burns' poems into Afrikaans and I repeated my former tale that there was a time when, as a small boy, I thought they had been written in Afrikaans and that a fellow named Burns had translated them into indifferent English.

The story was well received. On the strength of it I was motored up to Ayr to see the Burns Cottage and the Burns Museum that afternoon. The first thing I saw as we entered was a faded manuscript under glass; I rubbed my eyes for the document was in my father's handwriting! It was his Afrikaans rendering of Tam O'Shanter. The Curator was unable to explain how it had got here beyond the fact that a Capetown lady had sent it in some years ago.

I turned to the friend who had brought me from Glasgow and I said, 'Didn't I tell you that my father wrote these verses in Afrikaans? and here you are.' It was a tremendous success.

During a visit to Cardiff in charabancs we played a trick on the rest of the Empire Parliamentarians. I had noticed that the bus-conductors spoke Welsh so I arranged with them and with the other South African delegates that they should speak Welsh to us and we would reply in Afrikaans. They played up—they jabbered meaningless words at us and we jabbered meaningless words at them. The Parliamentarians were completely taken in for they were unable to distinguish between the two vernaculars, and at the end of the journey one of the Australian representatives said, 'You South Africans are a wonderful lot—how on earth came you



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all to know Welsh?'—and his surprise was echoed by the others.

I trust it will not be thought that I did nothing in Britain but play the fool, for indeed I transacted a great deal of government business. I had an office at South Africa House on Trafalgar Square and there I handled important trade and agricultural matters.

I saw endless deputations, called on Cabinet Ministers, inspected pre-cooling plants, made arrangements for shipping space, and attended to many affairs. At night I went to dinners and made speeches and broadcasts, visited docks and industrial areas and generally I was kept very busy. I interviewed among others the Prime Minister, Mr. Stanley Baldwin, at 10 Downing Street and my old acquaintance Mr. Jimmy Thomas at the Colonial Office.

Mr. Thomas was breezy as ever. I waited on him one morning to discuss meat problems. As it neared eleven o'clock I suggested an adjournment for tea. He exclaimed, 'Who the hell drinks tea at this hour of the day?' I told him I did, and that with us it was a ritual. He would not hear of it at first, but in the end an indignant Under-Secretary was sent to a restaurant to order the cup that cheers.

I enjoyed every moment of my visit, but now there fell a blow which spoiled my stay. I was standing on the balcony of South Africa House watching the traffic in Trafalgar Square. A diminutive telegraph boy came through the doorway and saluting, he handed me a cable from my wife. It said that our boy John had lost his right eye and his right hand in an explosive accident, and was in hospital critically injured.

This was sad news. I gazed out unseeing for some minutes then, suddenly, I looked up, and there stood Nelson on his column with one hand and one eye. It was a strange coincidence. Nowhere else in the world could a man have received such woeful tidings and have received such instant solace.

I rushed within and despatched a message to John: 'Terribly sorry, but through my office window stands Lord Nelson who climbed very high with one hand and one eye.'

I learned afterwards that he never looked back. He showed great fortitude and General Smuts cabled me some days later that he was out of danger and now that an examination of his left eye had become possible it was found to be intact.

An equerry from the King and Queen brought their Majesties'



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sympathy and many other friends showed their kindness, for word had appeared in the press.

When ultimately I received full details it appeared that the boy had been experimenting with chemicals. He rammed a product made to his own formula down the barrel of a horse pistol that hung on my study wall. In doing so the charge went off. It wrecked the room and it wrecked him too.

He made a wonderful recovery.

A professor who had listened to one of my lectures at Oxford and to whom I had confided the spiritual strength I had gained from Nelson's statue, sent me the following lines by the Poet Laureate:[1]

TRAFALGAR SQUARE, SEPTEMBER 1917

*Fool that I was: my heart was sore,*
*Yea sick for the myriad wounded men,*
*The maim'd in the war: I had grief for each one:*
*And I came in the gay September sun*
*To the open smile of Trafalgar Square;*
*Where many a lad with a limb fordone*
*Loll'd by the lion-guarded column*
*That holdeth Nelson statued thereon*
*Upright in the air.*

*The Parliament towers and the Abbey towers,*
*The white Horseguards and grey Whitehall,*
*He looketh on all,*
*Past Somerset House and the river's bend*
*To the pillar'd dome of St. Paul,*
*That slumbers confessing God's solemn blessing.*
*On England's glory, to keep it ours—*
*While children true her prowess renew*
*And throng from the ends of the earth to defend*
*Freedom and honour—till Earth shall end.*

*The gentle unjealous Shakespeare, I trow,*
*In his country tomb of peaceful fame,*
*Must feel exiled from life and glow*

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Robert Bridges* (Oxford University Press) by permission of Mrs. Bridges and the publishers.



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*If he think of this man with his warrior claim,*
*Who looketh o'er London as if 'twere his own,*
*As he standeth in stone, aloft and alone,*
*Sailing the sky with one arm and one eye.*

I finished the remainder of my programme with a heavy heart. There was still much to do. I visited Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester and other centres in pursuit of information that might be of interest to my work in South Africa and when at last all was completed Mr. Cooper and I made ready to return.

The Parliamentarians were staying on for some weeks longer so we said farewell to the many friends we had made and, no aeroplane being available, we returned by sea.

It was a peaceful quiet voyage after the overwhelming hospitality we had partaken of. We looked in at Madeira with its memories of the 'battle' on my way from the Great War, and beyond that we sailed uneventfully to Table Bay.

I travelled up by rail to Johannesburg and my family was at the station to welcome me. John was there, tall and erect, wearing a glass eye, his right arm in a sling. I remembered with a pang the little fellow who, years ago, had met me at this station with his, 'Daddy, all the time you was gone, I *thinked* of you a little bit every day.' Now it was I who had *thinked* of him while I was gone.



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# XV

## MINISTERIAL WORK CONTINUES

### I

I plunged into the official maelstrom at once.

Having left London on the 2nd of August, by the 23rd of that month I was back in South Africa and I was inspecting the site of the great Vaal River dam where many hundreds of workmen were feverishly pitting themselves against time to get the foundations in before the rains.

By the 27th I was holding political meeting in my constituency, and on the 30th Mr. Cooper and I were at Lourenço Marques in Portuguese territory on departmental business.

From there we travelled down through the bush, intending to cross the Maputo River and make south for Durban. It was wild tropical country with elephant, buffalo, and other big game, but on reaching the banks we found the ferry had sunk; so we turned north by a mere track and by nightfall we made the little hamlet of Stegi on the border of Swaziland.

On 1st October we left Stegi, under considerable difficulties owing to car trouble; traversed Swaziland, Zululand and Northern Natal to Durban. I opened an Empire Forestry Congress, with speeches, public dinners, etc., then went back by road to the Transvaal to grapple with Beef and Butter and other agricultural problems that sprang hydra-headed at my throat.

I travelled about holding political meetings and discussing the grievances of wheat farmers and maize farmers and cattle breeders and dairy owners and others demanding compensation for damage by hail and locusts and drought.

It was strenuous, but at all events there was no stagnation. In proof of this my diary says:

Left for Capetown by air to open Quality Wine Exhibition.

Fished on Bay.

Back to the Transvaal to address meetings along eastern Reef towns.



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To Bloemfontein by air to open Agricultural Conference; fifteen speeches.

To Northern Transvaal by car in heavy rain.

Investigated upper reaches of the Letaba River with view to building an irrigation scheme.

Angry deputations of timber growers.

Through Low Country by new road via Gravelotte to Sandringham, teeming with game.

Back to Pretoria; fortnight of departmental work.

Journeyed via Eastern Transvaal and via south coast of Natal to Griqualand to hold meetings.

On return to Pretoria flew to Bulawayo in record time of 2 hours 35 minutes to St. Andrews banquet.

Back to Pretoria next day in 2 hours 40 minutes in Hart Fury Defence Force machine.

To Southern Free State addressing meetings for a by-election. In spite of my eloquence, our man lost by over three hundred votes.

And so it went on till the end of the year; and this is a fair average sample of ministerial work in South Africa.

## II

Sometimes questions cropped up which gave one an opportunity for more interesting things.

North of the Kalahari Desert lie the Okavango and Chobe swamps. They owe their existence to the fact that at a certain stage the Okavango and the Kwando Rivers spread over the surrounding country and ultimately their waters are lost in the sands.

This region is little known and such maps as I have seen are faulty and meagre. Now, by a lucky fluke, there rose a controversy.

A South African scientist, Professor Schwarz, had written a book in which he put forward the theory that the Okavango, the Kwando, and the Zambesi rivers originally ran due south through what is now the Kalahari, and that in some comparatively recent geological cataclysm the Zambesi had been diverted to the Indian Ocean.

As for the Okavango and the Kwando, he was of opinion that within less than a century they had become choked by a growth of reeds which forced the water into the swamps.



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According to him, the rainfall in South Africa had been abundant prior to these events but now that the lifegiving streams no longer flowed in their ancient channels, the country was slowly but surely drying up. He said the Kalahari was a direct result of this process and that the rest of the Union would likewise become a desert in course of time. He suggested that the calamity could be stayed by dredging the Okavango and the Kwando and emptying the swamps into the Great Makarikari Depression and into Lake Ngami lying about a hundred miles south of the swamps so as to form a vast inland sea. The increased evaporation of moisture that was sure to follow would bring increased precipitation of rain to South Africa.

His views attracted widespread attention. Next to politics, droughts are our chief preoccupation and the thought of achieving a standing rainfall fired the public imagination.

Schwarz died, but so great was the interest he had evoked that a body was instituted known as the 'Thirstland Redemption Association'. Its membership rapidly expanded and in time the Association came to be a political factor of some magnitude. It brought pressure to bear on the Government, urging that the swamps be drained into the Kalahari Desert as Schwarz had planned.

This would have involved the expenditure of millions with no certainty of results so the demand had thus far been resisted, though by way of compromise a survey party had been sent up a few years previously to take contours and levels. The report was unfavourable but the protagonists were unsilenced. They said the inspection had been hasty and the officials who made it were jealous of the Professor and his work.

Dissatisfaction grew apace. Heated charges were levelled by the press and at public meetings and as I was Minister for Irrigation, the brunt of all this pother fell upon my shoulders. And so I decided to have a look at it myself.

Much of that area is remote desert country so I commandeered three machines, to be on the safe side. They were single-engined Wapitis, old-fashioned, but reliable. They were in charge of seasoned pilots and mechanics of the Union Air Force and I took with me the Director of Irrigation, Mr. Lewis, an expert of international repute.

We left Pretoria at dawn, flying across the northern Transvaal



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and southern Rhodesia and we reached Livingstone near the Victoria Falls that night.

We had some difficulty in convincing the local citizens that we were not on our way to the Abyssinian campaign and the arrival of our war planes created much excitement. Next day we took off, flying due west.

We made up along the Zambezi as far as Katima Molilo, then, leaving the great river on our right, we sped along the Caprivi Gipfel across the Linyanti swamps. We passed the Kwando (Chobe), then over hundreds of miles of curious transverse dunes until at last we struck the Okavango at Andaras on the Angola frontier—unmapped, unflown country. We landed in a clearing at a place called Kupembe, forty miles below Andaras, on the river bank.

At this point the Okavango begins to open into the broad swamps in which it ultimately loses itself and it is from here downward, according to Professor Schwarz, that the natives in the past used to come on rafts made of bundles of reeds and rushes. At the end of their voyage they abandoned their frail ships which floated down and sooner or later stuck against a tree or a sandbank and took root. This process multiplied *ad infinitum* caused a block in the river which in turn caused the swamps.

Schwarz held that by digging a canal through the reeds for hundreds of miles the Okavango and Kwando Rivers would resume their ancient course to the south and thus redeem the Thirstland of the Kalahari.

While Mr. Lewis made his readings I had time to look around. The river ran about forty yards wide, swift and clear, but I could see that some miles below it began to divide itself up in a number of smaller streams with wooded islands.

This area must be thickly inhabited for in a surprisingly short time after our arrival nearly three hundred river-bushmen appeared on the scene, chattering with excitement at the giant birds that had come among them.

They are called bushmen but facially they struck me as more akin to the Congo pygmies. They are black-skinned where the real bushmen is as yellow as a Mongolian, and though they are short in stature they are squat and ungainly where the South African bushman for all his simian features is delicately moulded in limbs and hands and feet.



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I noticed their curious build. They had remarkably broad shoulders and powerful torsos but their legs were thin and spindle-shanked and they walked in an ungainly waddle. They spend most of their lives sitting in their dugouts to paddle along the waterways, with the result that their arms and chests and shoulders develop out of all proportion to the rest of their bodies.

When Mr. Lewis had finished his survey we drove the river-bushmen from the clearing by signs, for none of us knew the language, and we took the air again. One of the machines smashed an aileron against a tree but it rose unharmed and now we followed south, photographing the swamps, seeing herds of buffalo and lechwe and occasionally a few elephant. We passed over the Selinda spillway, a narrow ribbon of greenery running east by west for about a hundred and fifty miles, from the Okavango to the Chobe River. The natives say that some years the water in the spillway discharges into the Chobe and at other times the current is reversed and it flows from the Chobe into the Okavango.

This will require closer investigation but at any rate we satisfied ourselves that the swamps were caused by the configuration of the plains and not by Schwarz's theory of piled-up rafts.

We flew about eighty miles southward then east by the Linyanti and Chobe swamps and so back to Livingstone where we stopped a few days to overhaul the planes.

Mr. Jalland, the District Commissioner, had kindly invited me to stay with him. He was on the aerodrome to meet us. His old Barotse gunbearer, Sigaswe, accompanied him and as he looked round-eyed at the Wapitis, his master asked him what he thought of them.

Sigaswe answered, 'Bwana, I have seen the white man's magic; his railway trains, motor-cars, gramophones and other wonders, but they die just like the Barotse.'

I was taken to a cinema show for the local natives that evening. It had been filmed by the Chamber of Mines in Johannesburg in pursuance of a 'Safety First' campaign to teach the native miners how to avoid accidents and rockfalls underground.

The fool of the piece was called Jim Fish. His role was to do everything in the wrong way in order to teach the others how to do it correctly. All through the picture Jim Fish got blown up by careless handling of dynamite or he would tumble down a shaft



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and break a limb or derail a tram or drill into a misfire. At regular intervals he was carried off on a stretcher.

The Livingstone natives reacted somewhat differently to what the promoters of the picture had intended. Every time poor Jim blew up or fell down there were roars of delighted laughter and when the reel ended with a final tragedy in which through gross carelessness he brought death and destruction on himself and his fellows, the applause fairly lifted the roof.

When our planes were ready we set out to check up on the Professor's suggestion to empty the swamps into Lake Ngami and the Makarikari and thereby increase our rainfall. We flew along the Zambezi and thence across the Chobe swamps to Maun at the lower end of the Okavango swamps. Elephant, hippo, buffalo and lechwe were down below. At Maun there is a police station and European officials of the Bechuanaland Protectorate who hospitably entertained us.

Next day we set a course north-west up the Santandibe channel to map that part, seeing herds of buffalo, elephant, hippo and so on. These swamps are uninhabited owing to the prevalence of tsetse fly, though there are cattle-owning natives on the outer fringes.

We flew as far as the Selinda spillway once more (also known as Makaweǥana), after which we turned south along the western marches, shown on the maps as Taokhe, then over dry barren country to Lake Ngami.

From Livingstone's book and other works of travel I had gained the impression that Ngami was a real lake with palms, and picturesque savages rowing their canoes on its waters. But whatever it may have been centuries ago, we found it to be merely a shallow wind-swept pan surrounded by a treeless desert. It contained not a drop of water and so little is it of a lake that from the air we could see the natives had dug wells all over its surface from which they were hauling up water for their animals.

Then we went back to Maun up the dry bed of the Nghabe. There were pools in the Botletle from Maun downwards but beyond, towards Rakops,there were none. The Botletle is the river or rather the dry water-course running from the Okavango swamps at Maun to the Makarikari a hundred miles south, and it was along this that Professor Schwarz had proposed filling Ngami and the depression.



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On the following day we started from Maun at nine a.m. We did another wide sweep over the swamps to take more photographs; then we turned south down the Botletle River to the Makarikari.

I doubt whether Schwarz could ever have visited the depression before writing his book! As we approached it we saw a strange phenomenon. The Makarikari pan (it is nothing more) is eighty to a hundred miles wide and over it stood a murky haze towering four thousand feet in the air. Although a stiff wind was blowing the pall did not sway or billow but remained stationary, its outer circumference following the rim of the depression. Mr. Lewis considers the haze to consist of finely powdered salt drawn up by the heat, for when we flew low the entire bed of the pan was covered with ten to twelve inches of it.

It seems clear that to divert the fresh waters of the Okavango into the Makarikari will merely produce another Dead Sea. It lies but a hundred miles south of the swamps so if the Schwarz theory be correct then it is curious that the presence of the swamps so close by, with a much larger superficies of open water, does not have the same effect as he says would be achieved by draining the swamps into the Makarikari.

The flight over the Makarikari completed the objects of our expedition and we now headed across the Kalahari Desert arriving at Pretoria without further incident. The flying time of the whole trip was 26 hours 50 minutes. The distance covered was 2,670 miles.

I published an account of our observations and it killed the Thirstland Redemption Association. At all events I have never heard of them again. Early in 1936 I returned to Capetown for the approaching session of Parliament.

It proved a dullish year. Parliament droned on until the middle of June and but for an occasional sortie into the country districts to hold party meetings and to open an agricultural show or two I remained in the House listening to the dreary debates.

I was under constant fire from the opposition benches. The farmers attacked me because food prices were low and urban members shot at me because the cost of living was too high. I was Public Enemy No. 1 and there were numerous complaints against me and my Department.

However, any Minister of Agriculture in South Africa is a



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scapegoat and as I look on Parliament and politics dispassionately, I was not unduly perturbed.

The session petered out at last and by the end of June I was addressing meetings along the coast of Natal in an endeavour to persuade our ultra-British friends that our only salvation lay in both races working together. I was not very successful.

In Durban and in the villages dotting the littoral most of the voters were as jingoistic and racial on their side as were the extreme Afrikaners on the other side.

Between these ultimates, English and Dutch moderates have been striving for many years to build up a united nation in this country, and the road is long and stony.

Having stated my creed, I journeyed through Pondoland to Port St. John's by lovely country. Thereafter the Swaziland Administration invited me to pay their Protectorate an official visit and I spent some interesting weeks travelling about being lavishly entertained. In the meanwhile my family were camped on Sandringham and I returned down along the Komati River and through the National Park to join them.

My boys and I went after lion, but though we flushed several, they were too quick for us in the bush and we failed to get one.

On our return from Sandringham I worked in office at Pretoria, attended Cabinet Meetings and I helped at by-elections, spoke at agricultural congresses, and met irate deputations in the countryside.

I went mostly by air. I might be in Port Elizabeth on the south coast of the Cape one week and in Natal or the northern Transvaal the next, for the old leisurely pace of the ox with which I had grown up as a boy has gone for ever and now I hurtled through space like a madman.

And the numberless speeches I delivered! I once saw a picture of a deceased politician in Hades. Bound to a chair with ropes, his punishment was to be compelled to endure recitals of gramophone records of the speeches he had inflicted during his lifetime. There was a look of excruciating agony on his face—I only hope I shall be spared similar torture in the hereafter.

I had three flying incidents during this year; two nearly ended in tragedy, the other was humorous.

I was proceeding from Capetown to the Orange River in a recently acquired twin-screw machine belonging to the Defence



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Force. As we approached the river after four hours' flying, there came an ominous knock in the port engine. I noticed the pilot and his mechanic uneasily watching through the window, and I could see that the propeller was revolving erratically.

Searching out a patch of level ground we landed safely. Pilot and mechanic descended and walked forward to investigate. Then the pilot called to me, 'Sir, come and see what a picnic we have escaped.'

We found that the split pins of the propeller boss had not been wired, with the result that all the nuts had worked forward. Several had already disappeared into space and others were on the verge of following suit. The pilot said another few minutes and the propeller would have broken away. Since then I have listened to many arguments by the Air Force as to what would have happened if the 'prop' had gone. Some hold that it would have shot straight forward but others say that with the nuts falling off at different moments the chances are that the propeller would have sheared sideways into the forward cockpit killing its occupants and leaving the passenger (myself) and the plane to nosedive into the earth.

The second incident arose out of my irrigation activities.

The Department of Irrigation was in my charge and of late years I had become increasingly interested in the subject. I had persuaded the Government to build the Vaal-Harts scheme at a cost of six million pounds and I was dotting the Union with other irrigation dams.

At the beginning of the session just ended I was hotly assailed for spending twenty thousand pounds on a certain irrigation survey without parliamentary sanction and the opposition devoted several days to castigating me. I had some time before inspected a place called Loskop, in the Transvaal, where I was determined to build a large dam. I let the Nationalists rave about the £20,000 and towards the end of the session when everyone was tired and jaded I slipped a million and a half on to the Estimates for the Loskop project and it was passed without a word of comment.

I put a thousand Europeans at work and as often as I could I motored out to see how things were doing. After a while I instructed them to clear the bush for an aerodrome and as soon as this was ready, Mr. Lewis and I flew from Pretoria to test its qualities.

After a long journey we reckoned we were on the mark and we climbed lower to what looked to us to be our destination. Smoke



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fires had been lit to indicate the wind but we were puzzled by a large bucksail stretched on the ground bearing in six foot letters the word 'Poksol'. I could not understand the meaning of this banner with a strange device and my pilot, pointing down, shook his head and he passed back a scribbled note to say that we must have missed our bearings. I was doubtful myself, but as our fuel was running low I ordered him to land. We did so without mishap and a number of workmen came forward to meet us. When I asked them what place this was they said it was Loskop, so we had reached the right address after all. When I asked what the inscription on the canvas stood for they explained that, looking from an aeroplane in the sky, all words must necessarily read back to front as in a mirror,so they had inverted Loskop into Poksol for our benefit.

I tried to persuade them of their error, but they were only half convinced and some of them went off shaking their heads, as if to say I didn't know what I was talking about.

The third incident took place soon after. Mr. Lewis had repeatedly urged me to have a proper map of the Union compiled but I had refused, partly on account of the cost and partly because in my ignorance I thought the existing maps were good enough.

I was soon converted to his viewpoint for shortly after the Loskop trip I had to fly down to northern Zululand to visit a survey camp.

Just as we were about to take off my pilot, Captain John Daniel, came to me. He said he was rather troubled for the only map he carried was one he had torn from a schoolboy's atlas. He said it was pretty inaccurate but it was the best he could lay his hands on. I told him to proceed and after a flight of some hours we were over Zululand. With a faulty map we lost our bearings and presently, while we were flying low over St. Lucia lake, our engine developed a popping and knocking that reminded me unpleasantly of a similar occurrence on the Orange River during the floods. But now there was a difference; on the former occasion we might at any rate have baled out by parachute with some assurance of a safe landing. Baling out over St. Lucia was a tougher proposition.

When the engine trouble started we were almost skimming the water so there was no hope of doing a long glide to the nearest shore which on either hand was about ten miles away.

St. Lucia lake, which is tidal, teems with both shark and crocodile and I doubt whether anyone could swim fifty yards without being seized.



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Even as the Wapiti engine knocked and spluttered I remembered the grisly story I had heard of a young Norwegian missionary who tried to wade a shallow inlet of the lake to visit his fiancée and her parents awaiting him on the far side. Although the water was only knee-deep he was attacked by a school of man-eaters and he was torn to shreds under the eyes of the horrified onlookers.

However, to the immense relief of Captain John and myself the engine defect suddenly rectified itself and we were able to continue our journey and after a longish search we located the survey camp. Having completed the business I had come on I flew back to Pretoria.

I had had enough of faulty maps by now. The crocs and sharks of St. Lucia converted me and the first thing I did on my return was to tell Mr. Lewis to go ahead. We enlisted the co-operation of nearly every land surveyor in the Union and they responded with enthusiasm. Thanks to their field notes the Irrigation Department built up the present topographical sheets without which no airman goes aloft. It cost £85,000, but to-day, with British air training centres all over the country, flying by day and night, I like to think that Mr. Lewis and I between us, with our map, have prevented many a crash and that we have saved many lives. Had it not been for his representations and for those uneasy moments over St. Lucia lake, our airmen and the British pilots would still be flying by charts torn out of a schoolboy's atlas.

In December an Empire Exhibition was opened in Johannesburg which cost a million of money and drew hundreds of thousands of people. My chief recollection of the event was a dinner in the Exhibition grounds at which Jim Mollison, the famous flying-man, was the guest of honour. He and a Frenchman had tried to break the London-to-Capetown record and had just missed doing so.

On 12th December I attended a Cabinet Meeting in Pretoria at which we discussed the situation that had arisen with regard to King Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson. After a long debate we drafted a cable to the British Government in which we stated our opinion that if he insisted on marrying her he should resign the Throne, and having thus in some degree sat in judgment on the King of England I took my family down to the cottage we have built at False Bay and my boys and I and Mr. Taylor fished from *Lucky Jim*, making good catches.



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# XVI

## TOURING BY LAND- AND AIR-WAYS

### I

January 1937. Parliament opened early this year and I was kept busy piloting a complicated Marketing Act through the House and through the Senate—a business that required more patience than Job was ever called upon to exercise.

In May, General Kemp and I toured the Free State Province for three weeks. Each of us made four speeches per diem plus bazaars, banquets, receptions and travelling from dorp to dorp. Whether we did any good I cannot say, but it was a monstrous programme and a severe physical strain on both of us. After that we returned to Parliament and I flew to Pretoria to attend a Coronation Service on Church Square to the new King, for Edward VIII had abdicated and George VI reigned in his stead.

During a journey to Port Elizabeth I took advantage of being near the Addo Forest to have a look at the elephant for whom I had decreed this sanctuary long ago. The neighbouring citrus farmers occasionally send up a load of oranges by wagon. Whenever the elephant hear the rattle of wheels they know there will be a pile of fruit near the Ranger's house and they silently pad in after dark to feed. Turning on the headlamps of a car does not disturb them so they can be watched from near at hand.

I was interviewed by many deputations and private individuals at Port Elizabeth who discussed a wide range of subjects. Then I embarked for Capetown on the mail boat. From here I had to travel up north to the country lying between the confluence of the Orange and the Vaal Rivers, the area where once the Griquas held sway.

The Griquas were a yellow-skinned race, a cross between the bushmen and the Hottentots and originally they lived along the coastal belt of Malmesbury in the Western Province of the Cape. As European penetration extended, they were forced inland and after many tribulations the bulk of them ultimately moved to this



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territory. They had acquired a slight infusion of European blood which seems to have made of them a happy-go-lucky carefree tribe, proverbial for their love of horses and strong drink.

They speak a jargon of pidgin Dutch and their good humour, their queer speech and queer ways are often quoted at convivial meetings and often some wag will give a rendering of a Griqua preacher exhorting his flock, a Griqua orator addressing his political supporters, or a Griqua in his cups. These stories take the place among us of Uncle Remus and Brer Rabbit. They have a tang of their own not easy to reproduce except in the Griqua vernacular.

A local resident told us a story at a dinner given me at Kimberley on my way through, to illustrate their way of looking at things. He said that in the old days the Griquas constantly quarrelled among themselves, splitting up into hostile factions, each under a different leader. They carried fire-arms and they marched out against each other. They were not, however, cast in the heroic mould and their style of warfare involved nothing more serious than long distance powder-play after which the opposing armies drew off, the side that had expended the most ammunition, and made the most noise, claiming the victory.

There came a time when a more mettlesome leader arose at the head of one of the bands. He disciplined his men and taught them to take aim instead of blindly firing into the air, and they shot to kill. This was in flagrant abuse of the prevailing rules of war, but his opposite number was equal to the occasion.

Calling his followers together at dusk as the new leader was approaching with his force he pointed to the enemy and he said: 'Brave men of the Griqua clan; there comes the foe! To-morrow fierce battle will be joined and many of us will be killed and wounded. If we knew to-night which of us will be killed and wounded to-morrow we could send them out of harm's way this evening, but as we do not know, I think it best for us all to get out.' This fitted so completely with the views of the rank and file that the proposal was carried *nem. con.* and they decamped in a body, satisfied that they had brilliantly outmanœuvred their opponents.

There was hearty laughter at this specimen of Griqua logic. An officer sitting beside me who had served in France told me he had felt like that himself at times before going over the top and, on consideration, I rather agreed with him.



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I followed with another story of a Griqua band who were in peril of being surrounded by a rival force. They called upon their leader to invoke the assistance of the Almighty which he did. He prayed: 'O Lord, we are in grave danger, please send Thy Son to help us.'

But his men protested. They said, 'This isn't child's play, tell the Old Man ("die Ou Baas") to come himself.'

To-day the Griquas are practically extinct, drink and the devil having done for the rest.

Back I went to Pretoria to attend to office duties and Cabinet Meetings and I moved about by land and air, hurrying to and from political meetings, conferences and congresses.

I grew to be case-hardened and whether I was called at three a.m. in wind or rain to start on a long journey or set off at midnight in a jolting goods train for some distant village, was all one to me and I liked the change and bustle.

## II

Now came another diversion. Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Governor of Kenya, invited me to pay him an official visit and I welcomed the opening. Arrangements were soon completed and Mr. Cooper and I left in a Defence Force Speed-Envoy machine. We reached Broken Hill, northern Rhodesia, the first day in seven hours fifty-five minutes flying time, and went on the next day via Mpika and Mbeya. At the latter place we circled over Mount Wessel Hickmann and looked down upon the waterfilled crater, lying dark and sinister beneath. Next day to Dodoma, in Tanganyika, six hours flying time. This was the place I had helped to capture from the Germans in 1916 and I still have the German flag I took from the Boma. We flew by Kondoa Irangi with its unpleasant memories of the old campaign and then across the Masai flats, with lion, giraffe, eland and other game far below. We climbed to 14,000 feet to escape the clouds. As we emerged above the ceiling there stood the ice-covered cone of Kilimanjaro, a truly magnificent sight.

We landed at Moshi, where I had sojourned of yore, then over Lake Challa and the Soda lake to Nairobi, once again seeing lion and giraffe and rhino. When we halted at Moshi to refuel I inquired after the local District Commissioner on whom I felt I



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should pay a duty call. I was told he had left that morning on safari. In my time, to go on safari meant a string of porters and weeks of absence in the bush. I asked how long he would be away and his subordinate replied, 'Oh, he went off at seven in his Ford car and he ought to be back this afternoon.' Which shows how things are deteriorating in Darkest Africa!

At Nairobi, Sir Robert and Lady Brooke-Popham hospitably entertained me. I occupied a suite in Government House and there were dinners and banquets. When I had sampled the festivities of Nairobi I went to see the rest of Kenya.

The Speed Envoy machine we had come by was too fast for the smaller aerodromes up here so I chartered a Rapide from a local company and with Colonel Turner, our South African Trade Commissioner, and Mr. Cooper, I set out. For its size Kenya is perhaps the most remarkable country in the world. Within its restricted area lie great mountain peaks, extinct volcanoes, wide rivers, swamps and forests and strange tribes and big game and fertile uplands. There are lakes with flamingos in unbelievable numbers, and there is a vigorous European community, mostly British, but with a strong dilution of South African Dutch, who are building what will perhaps become a sturdy nation in years to come.

We flew from Nairobi over lakes Naivasha and Nakuru. We saw the vast crater of Menengai and we crossed the Uasin Gishu plateau to Eldoret where many Afrikaners from the south are doing well. I was entertained at ranches where one can sit on the stoep looking up at Mount Kenya on the one side and at elephant browsing in clearings in the forest on the other.

At the village of Kitale I was on the aerodrome one morning. Mount Elgon, a forest clad peak, stood 16,500 feet into the sky.

General Smuts is a great mountaineer and much of his spare time is devoted to climbing inaccessible peaks in the Union. Once, when I looked him up at Capetown, I found him in bed with two doctors in attendance for he had overstrained himself during one of his weekend assaults on Table Mountain. I condoled with him but I said the Japanese had a wisecrack, 'He who hasn't climbed Fusi Yama once is a fool and he who climbs it twice is a damned fool.' The General said I had a perverted sense of humour.

Now there stood before me a mountain worthy of my steel and I asked a bystander how long it would take to reach the top. He



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said ten or twelve days to collect sufficient native porters and another ten days for the safari. I turned to the pilot of the Rapide and asked him how long it would take us to get there. He inspected the sky, wetted and held up a finger for the wind and said, 'About an hour, sir.' This was more like my idea of mountaineering and we took off at once. We rose steeply and in less than the stipulated time we were looking spellbound into the mighty cauldron, feeling as if we had reached the moon.

Long afterwards, at a Parliamentary luncheon in Capetown at which General Smuts was present, I steered the conversation towards mountaineering and soon he was telling us of his recent ascents.

I awaited an opening and then I said, 'Sir, I know you often climb our mountains at the Cape, but after all none of them are higher than six thousand feet whereas I have been to the top of Mount Elgon, a matter of nearly 17,000!'

General Smuts exclaimed, 'What's this, what's this, do you mean to say you climbed Mount Elgon and you never told me about it?'

I then began to describe the difficulties of obtaining porters, of the dense forests to be penetrated, of the eternal fogs and rains that shroud the slopes and of the troubles of gear and supplies. General Smuts listened with obvious interest and the others too hung on my words as I brought my story to the pitch of being about to start off on the expedition. Then I sprang on them the anticlimax of my aerial prank. There were roars of laughter and General Smuts thumped me on the back and called me a ruffian and a scalliwag.

The Administration of Uganda invited me to an elephant hunt. I have never had any desire to shoot an elephant but like the Portuguese Administration on a former occasion, they had pitched a camp and had gone to a great deal of trouble and I felt it would be discourteous not to go.

The Rapide took us via Jinja and the Ripon Falls to Entebbe on Lake Victoria Nyanza, and leaving Colonel Turner and Mr. Cooper here, I flew to Mbarara where I was met by Captain Pittmann, the game warden. We travelled by car to the Njamagesani River on the Belgian frontier, crossing the strange waterway that links Lake George and Lake Edward. In this channel were more hippo than I have seen together. Captain Pittmann thought there were two thousand of them in view.



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Beyond our camp lay Mount Ruwenzori, one of the marvels of the universe. I gathered from what Captain Pittmann told me and from what I had read in Stanley's *Travels* that the summit is rarely visible owing to eternal mist and clouds; but I was lucky, for the jagged mass stood clear for several minutes once and we had a complete if hurried view of the entire massif before the curtain of mist and rain enveloped it once more.

With Captain Pittmann was his ranger, Jock Jardine. I was anxious to know something of Uganda history so I asked him whether there had been much fighting in the country. 'Only among the missionaries,' said Jock, and I could well believe it, for on every second hill stood a mission station belonging to some denomination or other, and they were all at loggerheads.

On a Sunday morning I was lying in my tent when I heard the sound of a tom-tom and the tramp of many feet. Opening the flap of my tent I saw about two hundred native warriors armed with spears and shields. They marched along stamping and singing on what I took to be a tribal raid, but when I rushed over to inquire, Captain Pittmann said there was a church close by and so far from being on the warpath they were going to morning service; the tom-tom was in lieu of a bell to summon the faithful.

Then came the elephant hunt. Natives had been sent far and wide, and in a few days they reported the presence of a herd. We set out and after a long tramp we saw five splendid tuskers standing in a glade.

On the way from Mbarara I was struck by the large numbers of bicycles one passed. Uganda must have the largest bicycle population in Africa, for every native seemed to possess one. Jock Jardine told me he once stopped a native lad with a long package wrapped in banana leaves across his handlebars. The boy said it was his father's body he was taking to his village for burial. Jock said too that he had met another native carrying an American harmonium balanced on his machine. And now our elephant hunt was ruined by a cyclist. This is how. I carefully stalked the bulls until I was within thirty yards. As I was choosing the largest of them and was lifting my rifle to the aim, a native youth on a bicycle emerged into the clearing from a forest path. He was bent forward pedalling furiously and as he came, from sheer *joie de vivre*, he was ringing his bell for all he was worth. The effect was ludicrous. The great brutes whipped around with a snort of dismay



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and off they went in the wildest alarm. We never saw them again.

We started at sunrise the following day to have another try. On the broad plain where the Njamagesani enters Lake Edward we saw many elephant, but failed to get near enough for a shot as the ground was too open. We walked all day. It was an interesting experience, watching them feeding or standing in the river sluicing themselves. Captain Pittmann and Jardine seemed to know every individual elephant by sight.

In the afternoon as we were resting on the edge of a deep valley a mixed herd of fifty or sixty passed below us. One was a huge bull with tusks quite six feet long. Captain Pittmann said, 'Jock, where does that fellow come from; I've never seen him before?' Jock replied, 'I dinna ken yon felly either, but d'ye note the colour of his teeth, he must be from thae forests on the ither side o' the Congo.'

I scrambled down the side of the gorge and I got within ten yards of where I could see his trunk raised above the surrounding undergrowth as he pulled at the palm leaves overhead; but he never exposed himself and after a while he crossed the river into Belgian territory where he was safe and where in a clearing I had a good view of him—the biggest elephant I have ever seen, his tusks an umber brown which according to Jock denoted his forest origin.

As we trudged back to camp that night Captain Pittmann and Jardine were dejected because they had failed to get me a kill, but I assured them that the pleasure of seeing elephant at close quarters was all I wished for, and they cheered up.

Next day I returned to Mbarara. The Rapide awaited me and I flew back to Entebbe to pick up Colonel Turner and Mr. Cooper. After this by air to Thompson's Falls, Rumuruti, Nanyuki and other places and in the fullness of time we sat down at Nairobi once more.

Farewell festivities awaited me, and I had to attend numerous parties given me at the Muthaiga Club where everyone forgathers towards evening. Once, in refusing another 'sundowner' I said, 'Gentlemen, if this goes on I shall end up in an inebriates' home.'

The Governor of Uganda who was present replied, 'That's all right, Nairobi *is* an inebriates' home.'

My visit coming to an end, Mr. Cooper and I resumed our Air Speed Envoy and after a last hectic affair at the Club we started back. A squadron of British fighters was stationed at Nairobi be-



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cause of the Abyssinian war and they escorted us for a while by way of compliment.

We made Lusaka, the capital of northern Rhodesia, at sunset, and Sir Hubert Young, the Governor, received us. Next day, landing at Livingstone and Bulawayo for petrol, we reached Pretoria before dark, one's every idea of time and space set at naught.



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# XVII

## THE KALAHARI IRRIGATION SCHEME

About ten days after my return from Nairobi I happened to fall into conversation with General Smuts about the Okavango swamps and the Schwarz theory. I told him there was nothing in it as far as increasing our rainfall was concerned, but that it might be possible, by cutting a channel through the swamps, to run water south into the Kalahari down the at present dead river for a hundred miles and more, and so develop a considerable portion of the Kalahari lying uninhabited and useless.

He was interested and he suggested that I should go up again to explore the situation. I needed no encouragement for office life has never appealed to me. I took the preparations in hand without delay, sending a motor lorry ahead to establish dumps of water and petrol, and a week later I followed. Mr. Cooper was with me once again as well as my trusty friend Waldeck who has driven me for years and I decided to take John and Michael to see the Africa that lay beyond our borders.

Our outfit consisted of a Ford car and a lorry. The first leg of our journey was plain sailing; north-west through the Transvaal by reasonably good roads, and in two days we entered British Bechuanaland. From here our troubles started. We had to plough through heavy sand to Palapye and then to Serowe, the headquarters of Tshekedi, who had succeeded the famous Chief Khama.

Serowe is the largest native town I have seen in Africa, its orderly stockades neatly laid out. Beyond Serowe we entered a waterless desert. The track was so heavy that we never averaged more than ten miles an hour through dull scrub-covered plains with occasional herds of hartebeest and gemsbok and a jackal or two.

Our petrol consumption was terrific and the radiators required frequent replenishment, but we were able to fill up from the caches and we had no difficulty on this head. We pushed on for some days, camping where we found an open space in the bush at night.



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After that we got into a country of huge circular pans encrusted with soda or ash so finely powdered that our cars raised a cloud of what looked like a smoke screen belching from a destroyer; and as there was no wind to drive the cloud away, the rear vehicle had to keep miles behind to obtain visibility.

On these pans springbok were plentiful and John and Michael, both dead shots thanks to their training on Sandringham, provided for the larder.

The first waterhole we reached was at a place called Rakops on the dry course that leads from Ngami. Once every twenty years or so the waters from the Okavango swamps push down as far as this but I believe the stream has never flowed beyond here in human memory.

From Rakops we bumped our way across the most atrocious surface I have ever taken a car over and at length we reached Maun which I had previously visited by aeroplane.

Maun is the administrative centre for these parts. There is a District Commissioner and other officials as well as a trading post and everyone was kind to us.

I pitched camp on the other side of the water so as not to be cut off, for earlier in the year the Okavango had come down in flood and now, after more than three months, the effect of the heavy rains up-country was becoming evident. Having taken all that time to seep through the swamps, the normally dry river bed was a running torrent and the head of the water was already twenty-five miles below Maun.

We spent a week exploring our surroundings. Bird life was plentiful—duck, pygmy geese, and others. As for guineafowl, partridge and pheasant, in no place in Africa have I seen such quantities. Sometimes we had to stop the car and sound our hooter to drive them from under our wheels.

Then I decided on a voyage of exploration into the swamps.

I obtained two 'Makoro' (dugout canoes) with a dozen paddlers and at Maun I saw a rusted iron boat lying on its side where it had been abandoned by some trader.

It was full of holes, but my two drivers tackled the job with blowlamps and solder and they produced a seaworthy craft by next day. To propel this, eight more paddlers were requisitioned and our flotilla set out, accompanied by a native policeman to keep the crews in order.



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The swamps are of such vast extent that we could penetrate only a fractional area, but what we were able to see was interesting enough.

Our way ran up narrow channels between palm-fringed islands. The endurance of the rowers was astonishing. All day they stood in the dugouts and in the iron boat, wielding their paddles and singing in chorus.

Big game abounded. On the first evening of our journey we dragged the boats ashore and while we were busy preparing to camp a column of dust rose from the bush on a large island a mile or two away. It was a herd of wildebeest, some three hundred strong, come down to drink.

John and I were paddled across to shoot one, but it was too dark by the time we got there and we returned empty-handed, to the disgust of our native following.

Next morning we were on the move by sunrise and we continued all day with only an occasional halt to land on some foreshore to prepare a meal.

The paddlemen clamoured for meat so, towards sunset, we pitched camp and I went off by canoe to hunt. I carried a ·416 Rigby, a weapon recently presented to me by Mr. Taylor, and this was the first opportunity I had had to try it out.

I saw bush pig and there came troops of lechwe splashing through the shallows, but I failed to get a shot from the rocking dugout; so I tied up and walked across one of the islands. I had not gone far when a lechwe ram jumped up and I brought him headlong down. Returning to the canoe I was taken back to camp and I sent a party of natives to cut up and bring in the meat.

That night there was contentment. My little army sat around their fires chanting and chattering for hour after hour, eating their fill.

In this manner we sailed on. My two boys were thrilled at everything they saw and to them it was a great adventure.

With twenty-five mouths to feed the meat supply I had provided did not last long and one afternoon, having prepared camp on a large island, I took my Rigby and started inland accompanied by the native policeman and a young river bushman who had appeared among us.

We had not gone a mile when four magnificent buffalo bulls walked in single file from among the trees. I have often heard it



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said that a buffalo is the most dangerous of all wild animals; more ferocious than a lion and craftier than an elephant. But a fig for buffaloes! I stalked to within fifty yards of them and shot the largest bull out of hand. It was not sport, it was an execution, it was like shooting a tame ox in the backyard, and were it not that we needed food I could have regretted the deed.

When I looked round, the diminutive bushman was still with me, but the policeman had dropped so far to the rear that he was a mere speck in the distance.

At a further stage up the swamps we came on a branch of the Bukerhu or Bakuba tribe who for generations had been noted smiths and metal workers. The daggers and other weapons they make are in great demand. In former years they had mined and smelted ore under primitive conditions but now the guild has modernized the plant, so to speak.

One of them had been to Windhoek, the capital of German West, four hundred miles away. Here he obtained work on a railway line in course of construction and seeing a stack of rails in the goods yard, he had an idea. He hurried back to the swamps and since then, whenever supplies of metal run low a dozen of them make their way across the intervening desert to Windhoek and awaiting the cloak of a dark night, they pilfer a rail-length or two, returning in triumph carrying on their shoulders enough raw material for the next financial year. This, at any rate, is what the native policeman told us.

After a glorious holiday, we turned at last and when we were back at Maun I found that the water level had risen so high that there was but a strip of herbage three yards wide between the edge of the current and the forest lining its banks; and it was only along this strip that our cars could travel. Further delay would end in our being trapped, so we bade farewell to Maun and the good friends we had made.

It was touch and go, but we managed to extricate ourselves. The ground was already squelching and sodden underfoot and if the water had risen another few inches we would have been marooned. However, we found more solid going after ten miles or so and then we travelled day after day along the eastward track that goes to Livingstone.

We made a detour to the M'Babe plains, then via Kutchikau and Kissane to the junction of the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers,



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sleeping in patches of mopani at night and passing through endless forest by day with giraffe and other big game on all sides.

We were such a ragged crew by the time we reached Livingstone that we dared not show ourselves at the fashionable government hotel; so we halted our caravan in the bush.

From Livingstone we felt our way back to the Union in leisurely stages and on crossing the Limpopo into the Transvaal John and Michael insisted on our rounding off the expedition by making for Sandringham where we camped a while before starting the homeward run.

One of my Zulu houseboys had accompanied us on the journey as cook and general factotum. After our return I heard him telling the other native servants in my kitchen of his adventures and when they asked him what country he had visited he said he had been to England, and I think he believes it to this day.

As for the swamps, our visit strengthened my conviction that they can be drained and led down into the Kalahari desert and a large area now waterless and uninhabited could be redeemed. But the area is so remote from railways and markets that it will probably be many years before the matter is seriously taken up.



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# XVIII

## AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS: A TRIP TO RIO

### I

For the next six months I attended to my office in Pretoria and agricultural problems accumulated on my devoted head. Locusts ravaged the sub-continent. I was blamed for not having killed them off; milk and wheat and maize prices slumped and there was a drought which brought in a procession of rural deputations demanding financial assistance from the State.

Our political opponents exploited our difficulties. I give a few samples of messages I received.

A disaffected co-operative society in the Free State wired me: 'Grubs are destroying our crops, what are you going to do about it?'

From a drought-stricken area: 'Thanks for your broken promises. Our sheep are dead and we live on the sale of their skins.'

And again: 'Labour shortage in this area. We demand you send us three hundred native workers immediately.'

My replies were not always conciliatory. To crown everything there was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease among the herds in my own electorate of Barberton and, to prevent the epidemic from spreading to the rest of the Union, I was faced with the dread decision of ordering the destruction of nearly ten thousand head of cattle belonging to my constituents. In addition, I quarantined the entire district with the result that large supplies of fruit and vegetables could not be marketed and they were of necessity left to rot.

These drastic measures did not conduce to popularity, but the people of the Low Country are reasonable and after the disease was stamped out they agreed that I had acted for the best and in the long run I was forgiven.



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I flew some three thousand miles on departmental affairs, then I took my family to the coast for Christmas and the boys and I fished and found sanctuary on the waters of the Bay.

## II

1938. A brief session of Parliament at Capetown in February, and our five yearly term of office being ended, a general election was required by law. It was the old story of a flushed and hectic campaign about issues now forgotten. Rival orators thundered at each other; charges and counter charges were levelled and, again, the ill will and the friction was between the Dutch, while the English-speaking voters stood aloof but supported the less intolerant side.

I was absent for two months addressing meetings in almost every constituency in the country. I went by train and car and air, and I blush to think that I delivered upwards of seventy speeches in support of our candidates. Then I attended to my own district for a week or two, inflicting another thirty speeches on my supporters.

When the dust of conflict died down we found that we had been returned with the largest parliamentary majority ever accorded to any government in South Africa. We assembled the House in triumph and looked forward to another five years of internal peace. It was well that the future lay hidden from us!

The new Parliament was still sitting when there came the news that Hitler's troops had marched into Austria. We felt that a majority of Austrians desired the *Anschluss* so we were not unduly perturbed, and with the agricultural worries that beset me on all sides I had no time to give this turn of events much thought; and when the session was over, feeling in need of a rest I took my car and started from Johannesburg intending to go to Sandringham after lion.

I went alone for I felt the need of seclusion. On the second day, travelling at sixty miles an hour, my car skidded from the road, came round in a swerve, and dashed sickeningly across a heap of stones into a grove where overhanging branches tore most of the roof off. After a further wild career the car came to a standstill against a tree. I was shaken but uninjured.

I found that two of my tyres were burst from the various im-



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pacts and it took me several hours in a broiling sun to repair the damage. Then, with my front axle out of alignment and a wrecked superstructure, I crawled along. By nightfall I was near the homestead of Captain McBride, an old friend whom I had known in the 1914 rebellion, and I managed to reach his door. That night I went down with pneumonia.

It was distant country, but McBride looked after me for ten days like a mother. Mrs. Whittingstall from Acornhoek, who had nursed her husband when he was mauled by a lion, heard of my plight and she brought hot-water bottles and other medicaments for she was hospital trained. And an uncertificated but highly qualified American lady missionary from a station nearby sent kettles with which they steamed my lungs and later the district surgeon looked in by chance on his way to vaccinate a local tribe against smallpox.

On his return up the escarpment he sent a telegram which brought Mr. Cooper and my driver hurrying by car and then the matter was caught by radio and my wife and two boys raced down. Thanks to the care I received I was already lying on a blanket in the sunshine when they arrived. After a few days I was well enough to be taken to Sandringham and here we camped, and before long I was somewhat groggily on my feet.

For once, I was restless on Sandringham, and having heard that natives were burning down valuable forests in northern Zululand we went thither, travelling via the Kruger Game Reserve and then up the Komati.

Towards sunset on the first day the sky grew overcast. We were in thick bush country near the Swaziland frontier and as we halted to discuss our plans there arose a curious soughing noise like that of a distant waterfall; and then a terrific hailstorm burst upon us with a roar. We got the cars under cover of trees but this did not suffice. Stones the size of hens' eggs drummed down on us like shrapnel and we spent a miserable night. Next day we slithered along the muddy track to Stegi, a little village on the Ubombo range from where, after a good night, we travelled along the crest of the Berg by a newly-constructed route that led to the gorge of the Usutu River. Here, after much delay, we worked our cars across the pontoon and swung east by a path that had been cut by the Johannesburg Chamber of Mines for the recruiting of natives. By dark we reached N'Indumu close to Inyameti Lake where I had shot a hippo years before.



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Times had changed in northern Zululand. When first I came up here in 1922 we rode fly-bitten horses through unknown country. Now it was possible to take a car up to Kosi Bay and Lake Sibaya and at N'Indumu there was a police station with a sergeant in command. He made us comfortable and the following morning I went to see how the hippo had fared since I had turned their lake and the surrounding country into a sanctuary. More than sixty of them were disporting themselves in peace and safety and the sergeant told me many troops of Nyala antelope were to be seen at dawn as they returned from grazing. Previously they had been nearly exterminated.

From Inyameti we went to Kosi Lake. The route was sandy in places and mud-bound in others, but all went well and towards sunset we pulled up on the high bluff overlooking the water. On the far side stretched the forested peninsula across which General Smuts and I had ridden in search of a harbour. I have told how, at that time, the natives took to the jungle at the sight of our cavalcade, for they had never seen white men or horses.

To-day the Chamber of Mines had not only constructed a road of sorts to Kosi Bay but they were recruiting in these parts and the natives, so far from running in terror, looked on the arrival of motor-cars with equanimity.

The Agency had gone further. They had a boat with an outboard engine on the lake and we were scarcely arrived before a headman appeared to say that word had come from the 'big baas' in Johannesburg that it was to be at our disposal. Captain Colin Bain-Marais and his wife and son met us here by pre-arrangment. They were old friends and in less than half an hour my two boys and young Colin and the headman were chugging far out on the darkening surface. We were anxious about them, but towards midnight they returned talking as if they had cruised the Spanish Main.

We camped on the bluff for a happy week and explored the coastline of the lake. We navigated to Mananda point where General Smuts had thought to dredge a passage, and we sailed through the narrow channels that connect the main body with the two smaller lakes towards the estuary. The boys fished and hunted and had a wonderful time.

Once, on a calm windless morning we cranked up the recalcitrant engine and set off to take soundings, for the natives said the



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lower lakes were fathomless. With a reel of twine and a lead we established the average depth of the lakes to be from forty to sixty feet and having done this we set out for the top end of Kosi. At midday we landed to build a fire and cook a meal and then we cruised along the southern shore. Presently we came to an inlet. To our surprise this broadened out and we found ourselves on another lake, smaller than the others, but still of wide extent.

Schools of savage-looking hippo were disporting themselves and they were not content to lie with their eyes above water as they generally do, but the bulls came diving towards our boat, their bodies half way out of the water, setting up an alarming swirl. We made for the channel by which we had come and then the engine stalled and Mr. Jackson, an official of the Irrigation Department whom I had bidden to meet me, stood by with a Lee Metford rifle to repel boarders. He was the man I have spoken of who had been struck by a mamba and survived to tell the tale.

Luckily the hippos satisfied themselves with rushing towards us and slewing away at the last moment while we spent an exciting time trying to start the engine. An outboard is cranked on the principle of a humming top. A length of cord is twisted round the flywheel and given a sharp pull which, with luck, sets it in motion. But my driver and the boys pulled frantically with no result and my wife and Mrs. Bain-Marais, as the mothers of children whose lives they considered I had jeopardized, left me in no doubt as to what they thought of my conduct in bringing them here.

At last by joint efforts the engine spluttered into action, and running the gauntlet we left the plunging snorting animals behind us. To this day I cannot understand what went wrong with them. Perhaps it was their first experience of internal combustion.

As we emerged from the channel into the main lake more sorrow awaited me. A strong wind had blown up and the surface was in a tumult. Waves raced at us, threatening to swamp our boat and, of course, the outboard went on strike for the second time. We lost distance and were fast drifting on to a leeshore with the prospect of shipwreck and the spending of a night on the narrow beach that separates the waters of the lake from the surrounding animal infested jungle. Here again I was subjected to withering comment as the author of the expedition, but in the gathering darkness, Waldeck, who had taken out and cleaned the carburettor and had blown into tubes and pipes, succeeded in starting up the engine just as



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we were stranding. The waves had subsided a little by now and by dint of using our oars to eke out the waning powers of the accursed invention, we made camp long after nightfall. During the next few days the joint maternal animus against me began to fade; now Time, the healer, has softened the incident to such an extent that I have on occasion heard my wife and Mrs. Bain-Marais recite the epic of Kosi Lake to admiring guests at five o'clock tea in the course of which, to my surprise, I receive a meed of praise for valorous conduct in the great adventure.

To make up for the fright I had given everyone and to recover my good name I took the party to Sibaya, the largest fresh water lake south of the Great Lakes and I took them to the mouth of the Kosi River as my boys wished to inspect the place where General Smuts and I had ridden our horses through in former years.

Then we went to Mungusi to see the damage done to the forests by natives burning the trees to procure land for their crops. I drafted a report which attracted official attention and now a European ranger and staff have been appointed to save what is left of the timber in northern Zululand.

On completion of this work we journeyed southward across the plains, the boys and I taking pot shots at my 'favourite' crocodiles on sandbanks and lagoons and we made over the Pongola at Otobotini where I had listened to the ribald boating songs in years gone by and so to Hluhluwe, now a game reserve. We watched rhino lumbering in the undergrowth and wild dogs and other game, and I visited the tsetse traps for which I had placed large sums on my departmental vote and which bid fair to rid us of this pest.

Then we returned home. A session of Parliament followed, I forget for what reason, but I do remember standing up one afternoon to answer questions and suddenly the hall went round, and everything was blacked out.

When I came to, I found myself lying in my office with several doctors in attendance. I was thumped and punched and they declared I had sustained a nervous breakdown. They were unsympathetic and one of them said, 'If you think you can rush through life at high pressure like this for forty years you must pay for it.' General Smuts came in and looked down at me where I was lying on a couch. He told me the trouble was I took too little exercise. I was dazed and giddy, but I collected myself enough to answer



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that Chauncey Depew in reply to a similar charge had said the only exercise he ever got was acting as pall bearer to his friends who *did* take exercise. This time General Smuts said I had a *macabre* sense of humour.

Be that as it may, I was ordered a complete rest so I decided on a voyage; and with Mr. Cooper to assist me I sailed on a Japanese cargo boat for Rio de Janeiro.

## III

It was pleasant but hardly restful. After a comfortable voyage we steamed into Rio with a background the most beautiful in the world and as we reached the quayside, Brazilian officials and representatives from the British Embassy came on board to meet me as did also our Union Consul-General for the Argentine who had come up from Buenos Aires for the same purpose.

I was given free passes over every railway system in the country and now began a round of sightseeing and festivities and generous hospitality almost surpassing that of Britain.

We were taken for hundreds of miles into the interior to visit *fazendas* and citrus estates. We were flown from Rio to São Paulo, the industrial centre of Brazil, where the population was revolutionary and discontented with President Vargas who, with the support of a strong army was running the republic on the lines of a benevolent autocracy.

I did not meet him in person, but I had a sneaking admiration for his methods of which I took careful note for future reference.

I had intended merely to run across to Brazil and back, but now the Union Government cabled to ask whether I would proceed to Uruguay and the Argentine on a courtesy visit. I agreed and together with our Consul-General and Mr. Cooper I embarked at Santos for Montevideo where we did more sightseeing and then up the mighty Plata River to Buenos Aires.

Here again we received princely hospitality. Once more free railway passes were showered on us with state coaches and special dining saloons. We did long journeys to inspect cattle ranches and stud farms and we sailed three hundred miles up the Parana to the refrigerating and canning works in the province of Entre Rios and were taken to Mar del Plata, the fashionable watering place where the citizens of Buenos Aires spend their holidays.



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I had a long interview with President Ortiz. *Inter alia* I inquired whether diplomatic relations between the Argentine and Brazil were good. He said they *were* good until the Argentine started sending over football teams to Rio.

The President kindly detailed several officials to attend on me wherever I went and they conducted us on long tours.

The Governor of Mendoza, at the foot of the Andes, invited my party and myself to be his guests. We travelled by rail for six or seven hundred miles across the vast pampas, luxuriously installed in a special coach, and were sumptuously housed and entertained on arrival. The people of Mendoza, like those of São Paulo, are not enamoured of the Central Government and here too the germs of discontent and future rebellion were in evidence.

From Mendoza we took the air and flew over the Andes to Santiago the capital of Chile. It was a wonderful experience. The route took us up a mighty gorge and we looked down on the statue of Christ on the international frontier and on the landslide which had buried a long sector of the railway some years before, since when communication across the Andes has been made by mules and air.

We skirted Aconcagua, the highest peak in South America, and on landing at Santiago we found ourselves in the middle of a Presidential inauguration, the streets crammed with troops and guns; but here too I sensed an undercurrent of hostility. We motored to Valparaiso on the Pacific Coast and then we returned across the Andes to Mendoza. Thence we returned in our state coach, by rail to Buenos Aires.

Throughout our journeyings in South America we carried diplomatic passports which ensured that we and our baggage were expedited without trouble or delay at the customs barriers, and ports of entry and exit. There was one exception however.

I had brought with me a morning coat and top hat for official occasions, though I found use for neither as the Latin Republics don't believe in ceremonial. My topper travelled in one of those cylindrical mid-Victorian affairs long out of date. Wherever we went in Brazil and Uruguay and the Argentine the rest of our luggage was always checked through without trouble, but this unusual article was an object of suspicion. They seemed to think the hatbox contained an infernal machine and it became an infernal nuisance. We encountered no difficulty with our other kit



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but there was a constant hold-up while customs officials and soldiers gathered round to examine and discuss this incriminating exhibit and it was only on my being fetched back on each occasion to unlock and bring to light my silken headgear that *exequator* was given.

The box had caused us so much trouble and loss of time that when we re-embarked at Buenos Aires at the end of our visit and I found more people examining the offender, I seized it with an oath and pressing it into the arms of our Consul-General demanded that he take it home with him, as I never wished to set eyes on it again. He looked sheepish and embarrassed as he went off with the ill-omened package.

We sailed down the la Plata and up the coast to Rio on a German passenger ship. In press interviews I had made no secret of my dislike of Hitler and the Nazi terror and the South American papers had given prominence to my remarks. Therefore, the Germans boycotted us on the voyage. Stewards refused to answer the bell, baths were never available, we were pushed into a dark corner of the dining saloon, and the food they gave us was execrable.

By this time Hitler had invaded the Sudetenland and as he had vowed after his annexation of Austria that he had no further territorial ambitions in Europe it was clear that his promises were piecrust.

At any rate, my experience of their bad manners on the ship and my talks with German passengers and crew gave me an insight into their mentality and outlook which served to strengthen my dislike of the Nazi methods; and I determined that so far as in me lay I would help to keep my country free of their doctrines.

At Santos I refused further contact with them and we transhipped to a British liner to Rio where we spent a week of entertainment and then started homeward bound on another Japanese cargo boat, Mr. Cooper and I being the only passengers.

The Japs are a suave and crafty race, but they are polite, which is more than I can say of the Germans, and though our quarters were rough they did their best to make us comfortable.

After an uneventful voyage we reached Capetown in January 1939 with my family at the pierhead to meet me.



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# XIX

## IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES

After my breakdown in Parliament three months ago, General Hertzog, with understanding sympathy, had decided that the portfolio of Agriculture would kill any man, so early in 1939 he made me take over the Ministry of Mines. This was a quiet haven and for the ensuing Session and some months thereafter I had a comparatively easy time.

The Gold Mining Industry of the Witwatersrand is so efficiently run that my post was almost a sinecure; but as Irrigation and Forestry were still under me I was not altogether idle. I took part in the debates in the House and once I travelled by car through Namaqualand to Port Nolloth, the dreary little harbour where General Smuts and I had been taken aboard a troopship in 1902 on our way to the Peace Conference at Vereeniging at the close of the Boer War. I was pressed to spend half a million pounds to turn the place into safe anchorage for big ships, but after a careful inspection of the rocky coast, and knowing the poverty of the hinterland, I turned down the project.

Later, I flew from Capetown to inspect the diamond diggings at Alexander Bay where I had made a forced landing during the Orange River floods. The whim took me to fly upstream to view the rugged mountains over which the engine at that time had broken down. The pilot had no maps and a heavy mist lay over the land, but I directed him from the cockpit and what we saw confirmed my former impression that the country below was the most jagged, frightening region a single engined machine could negotiate in the African continent.

I told General Smuts about it on my return and he flew up some weeks later. He came back and he said it was the worst he had ever seen.

In March, while Parliament was in progress, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, and now we realized that Europe was heading for war.



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We are a small people in South Africa and we play an infinitesimal part in the affairs of the Empire, yet it was only natural that we should ask ourselves how this was to affect us. General Smuts and I agreed that it vitally touched our country. We felt that only within the British Empire was there security and if we contracted ourselves out we should not long retain our freedom as we would be seized by one of the great predatory powers for the sake of our strategic base at the Cape and our mineral wealth, and because of our internal political weakness.

In Cabinet and in Parliament those Ministers and Members who had been supporters of the old South African Party prior to fusion in 1933 stood by us, but we were unable to obtain the views of General Hertzog and his wing on the all important question as to whether South Africa would remain neutral in case of war with Germany or whether we would stand by Great Britain. Every time General Smuts sounded the Prime Minister he was told that it would serve no useful purpose to discuss the matter as Hitler did not intend war, his reputation having been built up on bloodless victories. The other ex-Nationalist Ministers and Members of Parliament were equally reticent, so that with a crisis approaching we were unable to formulate a policy.

Early in July my family and I camped on Sandringham. My boys and I went on several lion hunts with our old friend Mr. Whittingstall, who shot one right in front of John and Michael to their great excitement. The morning after we returned home General Smuts came to me. He said Sir Ernest Oppenheimer and his son were flying north to view a volcanic eruption in the Belgian Congo and they had invited us to accompany them. He said he felt that war between Germany and Britain was now a certainty and we might as well have a final holiday.

I did not wait for a second asking and on the seventeenth, piloted by Captain Halse, we started from Johannesburg. As the weather was bad we did not get beyond Pietersburg the first day, then in two days' flying to Zomba, the capital of Nyasaland, where we stayed with the Governor. We flew over Mount Mlanje, a stupendous mass of rock, probably an extinct volcano, about thirty miles from Zomba. General Smuts thought this would prove to be the highlight of our journey, but I told him the highlight was the Wessel Hickman crater near Mbeya. He said he had been to Mbeya several times and he had never heard of either crater or



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mountain there. Next day for three hundred miles along Lake Nyasa and as we neared Mbeya I pointed out Mount Wessel Hickman to the pilot and asked him to climb over it, which he did, and we looked down into the dark water-filled depths of the crater as I had done once before. When we landed, General Smuts made me the *amende honorable* and he said that this indeed was the highlight of our journey. But we were both wrong for the real highlight was still to come.

On 20th July from Mbeya over Lake Rukwa and skirting the entire length of Lake Tanganyika we landed at Usambara, in Belgian territory, to refuel. Lake Tanganyika, especially the eastern side, is a magnificent example of one aspect of the Great Rift Valley that lies longitudinally across Africa. The coast stands up a stark wall of naked rock like the Mountains of the Moon and it is probably the most characteristic area of the depressed sector of the Rift as opposed to the great peaks and volcanoes that were thrown skyward.

Now came the climax. From Usambara we flew to lake Kivu, a stretch of water surrounded by hills and dotted with green islands forming almost as beautiful a sight as the northern Italian lakes. As we sped onward we saw in the distance a tall column of steam and as we drew nearer we found that it was caused by molten lava flowing into the lake on a front of about five miles.

Inland was a fiery river of lava pouring down from a 10,000 foot volcano, Mount Nyamlagira, fifteen miles away, and to the right stood another volcano sending forth a cloud of dense smoke.

*This* was the highlight of our expedition. We flew along the blazing torrent. It had made its way down the slopes, destroying everything in its path and for long distances on either side the trees stood scorched and withered from the heat, and the acrid smell of sulphur reached us even on high. At intervals bubbles of lava, thirty or forty yards across, slowly welled and heaved like simmering porridge. When they broke, flaming spurts shot upward in all directions.

Lifting the nose of his machine, Captain Halse climbed up the contour of the volcano and soon we were over the source of the eruption. The lava was not ejected from the crater itself, but from a number of huge vents blown in the flank of the mountain. Round the vents were tall cones of yellow sulphur from the bowels of the earth.



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Climbing to 11,000 feet to escape the effects of atmospheric disturbance we circled over the crater, one and a half miles in diameter, a seething cauldron of fire and brimstone, a wonderful sight indeed.

In the floor of the deep crater, on the far side, was a smaller crater of immeasurable depth and we learned afterwards that the Belgian Government was unaware of its existence, so perhaps we had made a discovery. I have witnessed strange and interesting things in my time, but nothing to equal this daemonic spectacle.

General Smuts too must have felt the grandeur of the scene. I noticed his hands showed taut as he grasped the rails of his seat and his features were tense as he gazed at the fiery tumult below. He told me that evening that to him it was a culminating experience.

Now we made east, and skirting round the other volcano, we landed at Kisenyi, on the northern end of Lake Kivu. A Russian woman had established a guesthouse here. She did not claim to be a daughter of the Tsars like the refugees in China, but she was obviously well bred and we speculated on her history and how she came to be in this remote spot. She made us comfortable and we spent several hours watching the lurid flare of the volcanoes pulsing across the dark background of the night.

On the following day we sailed for twenty miles to where the lava was reaching the water. Our glimpse from the air had been so transient that we wished to have a closer view. It was an amazing sight. On a front of several miles, a viscid mass of burning lava was flowing into the lake at about a yard a minute, and as it met the water great clouds of steam rose hundreds of feet into the air.

We navigated cautiously. As we approached we dipped our hands and the water was lukewarm; then it grew hotter and from ten yards away we were nearly at boiling point and the skipper of our craft grew anxious.

In Great Britain I had visited iron foundries where steel was poured from crucibles and we were given coloured glasses to protect our eyes; but the incandescence of molten lava at close quarters was beyond belief. I think our early progenitors must have evolved their ideas of hell fire from volcanic upheavals.

The Bay of Saki into which the flow was discharging seemed to be gradually altering its coastline and if the eruption



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continues for a year or two it will probably be obliterated.[1]

We returned to Kisenyi by sunset to learn that a party of South African students had met with an accident. Some of them had gone into the Parc Albert, to see the big game. While they were watching a herd of elephant, a large bull rushed at their car, ripped up the roof with his tusks, and after smashing radiator and bonnet and mudguards he flung the vehicle on its side and then disappeared into the bush. Of the six occupants, five sustained only minor bruises but the sixth, Professor Gevers of Johannesburg, had both his legs broken. He was brought in that afternoon and arrangements were made to fly him to the hospital at Nairobi where he ultimately recovered.

In the meanwhile, General Smuts and I and Sir Ernest and his son decided to visit the Parc Albert next day. Our road took us through a beautiful country of high volcanoes and magnificent scenery. A few miles after we had entered the Parc Albert we saw the battered car lying some distance from the road and we went to have a look at it. To our surprise we came on the elephant that had done the damage lying stone dead about two hundred yards away, an immense bull with eighty pound tusks. The cause of his death has remained a mystery.

I think, however, he died of anthrax. When I was in Uganda two years before, my camp on the Niamagesani River overlooked the waters of Lake Edward. A mile or two out was a small island of perhaps fifteen acres. Captain Pittmann told me that some time previously he gazed across one morning and to his astonishment he saw four elephant there. They must have swum thither, for the intervening stretch was twenty fathoms deep. The elephant remained on the island for a long time and he saw them daily. Then he noticed that only one elephant was left and he rowed over to see what had happened. He found the other three animals lying on their flanks, their trunks and limbs distorted as if they had died in mortal agony. He came to the conclusion that the symptoms were those of anthrax. Every square yard of the island was pitted and trampled, the trees were torn down and there were great holes the elephant had scooped with their tusks. He had seen them do this before when smitten with the fell disease.

One of the students I met when visiting the wounded professor

[1] *Transactions of the Geological Society of South Africa*, vol. xliii, 1940. 'The 1939 Eruption of Nyamlagira,' by T. W. Gevers, M.A.



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at Kisenyi told me that in entering the Parc Albert they had followed the usual custom of posting a native guide on their front mudguard to warn the driver against tree stumps and antheaps. As the elephant charged the native leaped to earth and fled into the scrub. He hid himself for several days before he reappeared. He explained his absence. He said he had seen that the elephant was dying by the way it drove aimlessly at trees and dug its tusks into the soil. He knew from his medicine man that when elephant acted thus they were bewitched and misfortune was on hand. Therefore he had thought it best to make himself scarce. We didn't blame him; the medicine man had been right for once.

Our party spent some days in the Parc, with Ruanda as our headquarters. There were buffalo, more elephant, lion, and literally thousands of hippo and much smaller game.

Back to Kisenyi and from there by plane across Lake Kivu to Costermansville, an administrative centre at the southern end. The Belgian authorities staged a war dance for us by the Watussi, a tribe of long-limbed, slender, hamitic warriors, hardly one of them standing less than six feet six. They looked over-bred and their angular cheekbones and hawklike noses reminded me of the royal mummies I had seen in the museum at Cairo. By contrast, there was a dance by a tribe of pygmies who looked more like baboons than baboons look like baboons.

As I sat between General Smuts and the local Governor I caught snatches of talk from behind me coming from Belgian officials and their wives. They were discussing the probability of a European war. I heard one man sum up the situation. He said: 'Peuh, les Anglais ne se battront pas, ils sont une nation de négociants.'

From Costermansville we flew down the Ruzizi gorge, an arresting sight, and then to Lake Tanganyika and to Albertville, then down the river that strangely breaks at a right angle from Tanganyika to the Congo.

We landed at Kabalo and from there up the Congo. North of Bukama grazed the biggest herds of game I have seen in Africa. Countless thousands of lechwe and other species; troops of elephant and buffalo.

We stopped at Elizabethville to fill our tank and then flew to the N'Kana copper mines in northern Rhodesia. Total flying time for the day seven hours thirty five minutes.

For the next few days we toured the mining centres and were



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amazed at the development in the heart of the African jungle brought about through Sir Ernest Oppenheimer's foresight. Townships had sprung up, factories and furnaces were in full blast, the European workers were comfortably housed and the native quarters and hospitals were as good as those on the Rand.

All through our expedition, General Smuts was like a schoolboy on a holiday as he had been on that faraway trip he and I had made into Zululand years ago. With the Rhodesians he was in his element and at dinner every night he had many interesting things to say, a few of which I noted down.

Once he spoke of his journey to Palestine across the submarine-infested Mediterranean after General Murray's setback at Gaza in 1917 and he told us of how he and Mr. Lloyd George went to Italy after the Caporetto débâcle. He said the Italian General Staff and the politicians were in a state of panic and they spoke of a separate peace with Germany. Signor Orlando and the rest of the Cabinet had completely lost their heads. They shouted and gesticulated at one another over the conference table and behaved like madmen. Orlando at one stage cried out, 'Je suis Sicilien, je suis Sicilien, je me retirerai à mon île et là je mourrai dans la dernière tranchée.' Mr. Lloyd George acidly remarked that dying in the last ditch in Sicily was hardly a contribution to the problem of stemming the tide on the Isonzo.

The French delegates were openly scornful, and General Smuts told us it was only Mr. Lloyd George's tact (and, I have no doubt, his own) that smoothed over a dangerous impasse and kept Italy in the war. He said King Umberto was the only Italian who shewed a glimmer of statesmanship.

Another evening, speaking of the Peace Conference of Versailles, he said only Clémenceau and Lloyd George carried heavy guns; the rest were small men. He said that President Wilson was doctrinaire and didactic though he had the most comprehensive vocabulary of idealism he had ever heard.

In lighter vein General Smuts said he once had a Basuto named John Sapetla working for him on his farm whose correspondence was always addressed to the 'Rt. Hon. Mr. John Sapetla, Esq., care of J. C. Smuts.'

He summed up his opinion of the Nationalist Party by telling us that during the last elections an inmate of the Pretoria asylum had rung up their leader Dr. Malan and said, 'Doctor, doctor, I just



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want to let you know all we lunatics over here are Nationalists.'

I slipped in a couple of yarns too. One I had from my grandfather. In his youth he owned a number of slaves he had inherited from my great grandfather. Two of them, Samuel and George, had quarrelled in their youth and they remained bad friends for the rest of their lives.

At length, Samuel lay dying of old age in his hut, and my grandfather told the other offender to make his peace. Accordingly George, an old man too by now, went to where Samuel lay on his deathbed and he opened negotiations. He said, 'Samuel, I'se come to tell you how sorry I is about that thrashing I gived you long ago.'

On hearing this, Samuel raised himself on his elbows and replied, 'You black scum, you says you gived me a thrashing; you is a damn liar—I whipped the hide off you by the cattlekraal that day and you knows it.' Having delivered himself of this parting thrust he fell back and contentedly breathed his last.

I told another story apropos of the fact that in the Union we are inclined to look on manual labour by Europeans as *infra dig.* An old Boer was invited to spend a few days with an English friend in Johannesburg, a noted tennis player. He was taken to see a match in which his host took part.

After a strenuous game the latter returned from the courts exhausted and streaming with perspiration. The farmer looked him up and down and said, 'Man, why don't you let your nigger do that for you?'

These quiet Rhodesian memories constitute what were, perhaps, the last carefree hours General Smuts and I are destined to enjoy for, our visit ending, we flew back to Pretoria where grave issues awaited us.



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# XX

## THE END OF THE 1930's

### I

It was August 1939. War clouds were gathering in Europe, but we found that General Hertzog, our Prime Minister, had withdrawn to the seclusion of his farm and we could get no information from him. Obviously, if war broke out between Germany and Britain, the Government of South Africa would have to state its policy; we would have to say whether we intended standing by the rest of the Commonwealth or not.

I have refrained from stressing our Cabinet difficulties during the six years I served under General Hertzog. He was a man of culture and a gentleman, but he was possessed of an uneasy temperament and there had been frequent trouble and several acute crises which had led to resignations of some of our colleagues. General Hertzog never seemed to realize that he and his wing of the United Party were in the minority and that he was being kept in power by General Smuts and our side of the coalition. He seldom consulted us and on various occasions unpleasant incidents and unpalatable measures had been forced on us.

General Smuts throughout showed real statesmanship. He knew that many of his followers thought he was weakly submitting to affronts, but time after time he counselled patience. He said we were engaged in a vital attempt to persuade Dutch and English to work together and if at last there came a time to break it should be on a question of national importance instead of these minor quarrels.

That time was on hand. From the start the United Party had been united only in name. The old Nationalist stalwarts who had joined the new party under General Hertzog in 1933 had done so with mental reservations and we on our side had entered the pact with misgivings.

Nevertheless, both sections had done their best, and we had struggled along and somehow or other we had managed to keep the ship afloat. Now came the crucial test.



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Earlier in the year when all could see that Europe would soon be plunged in conflict, General Hertzog had repeatedly promised that he would summon Parliament before he decided on war. But he never undertook to consult Parliament should he decide *not* to go to war, and it had never struck anyone to question him on the point.

I have every reason to believe that he and his wing in the Cabinet had agreed to remain neutral and that they intended doing so without calling Parliament together.

This would have placed General Smuts and his supporters in a terrible predicament for there would have been no constitutional means of reversing a neutrality decision.

A unique coincidence saved us from this dilemma. Under the South African Constitution, all laws have to be passed by the House of Assembly and the Senate combined. It so happened that towards the middle of August the government Law Advisers discovered that the life of the Senate would expire in a few weeks and unless both Houses met to pass a law extending the period no legislation passed by the Assembly alone would be valid.

Hereupon General Hertzog reluctantly summoned Parliament for a brief three-day Session in order to cure this technical defect.

The last thing he desired or expected was for war to burst upon him while the House was sitting. But this is precisely what happened. As our special parliamentary train pulled into the station at Capetown on the morning of Friday, September the 1st, we were met with the news that Hitler had invaded Poland and that Britain and France would soon be at war with Germany. General Hertzog's luck was out; he was caught in a mesh. With Parliament met together he could not now prevent the House from taking a vote on the question of peace or war and his plan to remain neutral without Parliamentary consent had been frustrated.

Parliament was to open next morning (Saturday) and throughout Friday there was suppressed excitement. Members stood in knots in the Lobby eagerly discussing the position, but no one knew what the Prime Minister was going to do, for he preserved a sphinx-like silence.

At ten-thirty a.m. on Saturday everyone was in his place when the Speaker stood up and the moment prayers were over a score of Members were on their feet demanding to know what the Government intended to do. It was an extraordinary situation. The



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Cabinet consisted of thirteen Ministers of whom General Smuts and six others of us were old South African Party men, so that we were in majority of one, but thus far General Hertzog had given us no inkling of his views though we were co-responsible for whatever line was to be adopted.

Now General Hertzog could no longer evade the issue and, pale and tense, he stood up to say that as the only business of the House on opening day was to give formal notice of a Bill to prolong the life of the Senate he would make a pronouncement on Monday morning. We adjourned, no wiser than before.

That afternoon we received notice of a Cabinet meeting on Saturday at three p.m. at Groote Schuur, the historic residence bequeathed to the nation by Mr. Cecil Rhodes as the home of future Prime Ministers of the Union. He did this at a time in the Boer War, when the likelihood of there ever being a Union of South Africa seemed remotely improbable.

I can remember how in 1902, as a youth, I was serving in the field under General Smuts. Word came through that Mr. Rhodes was dead and of that strange proviso in his testament. We received the news with scornful laughter; it seemed to us a bitter mockery that this Englishman should speak of a United South Africa and of a Prime Minister while we were still at each others' throats. If anyone in those far-off days had ventured to tell me that I was to enter that very building as a Union Cabinet Minister to speak on behalf of taking arms at England's side I would have thought him insane.

But so it was. I had climbed up through the intervening years with General Smuts as my leader. He and I and scores of thousands of South Africans of Dutch descent had come to see that the British had treated us fairly. They took our country but they gave it back to us with Natal and the Cape thrown in for good measure. We enjoyed greater liberty and security than we had under our own republics and we saw that our only hope of survival as a free nation was inside the Commonwealth.

Therefore we attended this gathering at Groote Schuur determined that South Africa should once more play its rightful part against German aggression.

It was a momentous occasion. I was the first to arrive and I watched the other Ministers as they drove up in their cars, each vehicle bearing the embroidered pennant of the Union. We were



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ushered into a reception chamber hung with priceless tapestries, and containing Chinese vases and lacquered furniture. General Hertzog awaited us. It was evident from the start that he had sent for us not in order that we might consult with him but so that we might receive his orders.

He strode backward and forward across the carpeted floor and spoke for nearly three hours without a halt, raking up the bitterness of the South African war and speaking in exalted tones of the humiliations we had undergone at the hands of the British and of the mighty work of reconstruction that Hitler was carrying out. The burden of his theme was that South Africa should remain neutral. If Hitler won the war he would not molest us and if the British were victorious we would be safe anyhow.

It was growing dark before he ended and it was decided to adjourn until next afternoon when we were to meet again.

General Smuts and I and the other five Ministers who stood with us decided that night that if General Hertzog insisted on neutrality we would carry it against him and take a vote in the House.

Next afternoon the Cabinet Meeting was a repetition of the previous one. Again General Hertzog harangued us interminably and it was a long time before General Smuts was allowed an opportunity to state his views.

He began by saying that the decision he had come to was the most serious he had been called upon to take in all his life—then he went on to say why South Africa should stand by the Empire and declare war on Germany. There was an occasional interruption by General Hertzog, but all felt the heavy responsibility that lay on our shoulders and throughout the discussions ran with decorum. When at length General Smuts declared it to be his intention to test the matter in the House, a hush fell on the room for we knew it meant the break-up of the government and it meant many other things still lying shrouded in the future. It was I who finally brought the conference to a close. I expressed my opinion as to our entry into the war; then I stood up and said to General Hertzog, 'Sir, it is quite evident that we have reached the parting of the ways. Those of us who are opposed to neutrality cannot remain in office with you; therefore this meeting is our last as fellow colleagues. I wish to thank you for the courtesy you have invariably shown us during the time we served under you and I hope the



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personal friendships we made will not be affected by what has happened.' Hereupon everyone rose, a butler brought in liquid refreshment which all partook of; we shook hands and what was perhaps the most critical Cabinet Meeting ever held in South Africa was over.

General Hertzog in the course of his lengthy speech had indicated that on Monday, September 4th, he was going to move a Resolution in Parliament declaring South Africa to be neutral in the war.

He was such an autocrat by nature that I verily believe he had never paused to consider whether he could carry his motion through the House. In the past, his method had been to walk into our Caucus and lay down the law with a slap of his fist on the table. He brooked no opposition and at any hint of criticism he would threaten to resign and appeal to the country.

This generally sufficed to bring his own immediate followers to heel, and on our side Members had more or less let him have his way for the reason I have already indicated—they had accepted General Smuts' advice not to precipitate a break on minor differences.

I am convinced that he thought he could walk into Parliament in the same way on Monday morning and force his neutrality motion on us by sheer domination of his personal prestige. Relying on this ascendancy he had never troubled to count heads and he had no idea how Members were likely to vote on a fundamental issue such as this. Had he done so an interesting but not reassuring problem would have faced him.

The South African House of Assembly consisted of 153 Members of Parliament of whom all but six were now in Capetown. Of those present, 147 in all, 104 belonged to the United Party, 29 were Nationalists forming the official opposition under Dr. Malan, a dour old Calvinist, 7 were Dominionites (the British equivalent of Malan's Afrikaans extremists) under Colonel Stallard, a Tory of the mid-Victorian school, 4 were Labour Members, 3 were Native Representatives.

On paper therefore, General Hertzog had a large majority against all comers but his snag was that of the 104 United Party Members serving under him, 66 were supporters of General Smuts and he could only rely on a personal following of 38, a fact he had never seemed to realize during the six years of his reign.



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On the other hand, the 29 Nationalists, all violently anti-British, would vote for anything anti-British and they would support a neutrality motion. With his own tail of 38, and with the 29 Nationalist recalcitrants, he commanded 67 votes against our 66, but we knew that the 7 Dominionites, the 4 Labour Members, and the 3 Native Representatives were with us, giving us a majority of thirteen.

We had made a preliminary canvass, and we were sure of our ground, but General Hertzog in his blind arrogance thought he had a majority in the House and that he could carry his neutrality motion. Indeed, he told both the Governor-General and General Smuts so and now he had blundered into a pit for his own undoing.

That evening, General Smuts and I and the five Cabinet Ministers who had supported us at Groote Schuur met in the Civil Service Club in Capetown and drafted a counter-resolution which General Smuts was to move next day.

By Monday morning, dame rumour had been busy. The House was to open at ten-thirty, but from nine o'clock onwards Members were thronging the Lobby and we were eagerly questioned: Was it true that Cabinet had broken up? Was it true that General Hertzog was to introduce a Neutrality Motion? Why hadn't he summoned the Party Caucus? What right had we to decide without consulting the Party? and so on, and so on. They were understandably indignant, for General Hertzog should at any rate have consulted his wing of the Party; but that was his affair, and we left him to explain things to his own people while we hastily ranged for battle.

Mr. Speaker droned the stereotyped prayer and the Bill to extend the life of the Senate was passed. Now came the real business before us. The public galleries were crowded and there was breathless silence when General Hertzog rose to put his motion for neutrality. He spoke for a long time and he repeated the arguments he had used to us at Groote Schuur—Hitler was justified; the British connection would always drag us into wars, and we in South Africa should remain out of the conflict.

Then General Smuts put his counter-resolution. He briefly stated our case for participation in the war. A long debate followed which lasted until nine p.m. that evening and then the bells rang for the most dramatic division I have ever attended. The tellers took a long time to check their lists but it did not need them to



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inform us that we had won the day. I watched General Hertzog where he sat across the floor of the House.

His face was ashen and it seemed to me that only now had it dawned on him that he was staring at defeat. The other five Cabinet Ministers who voted with him looked angry and perturbed and I gained the impression that they were furious at the way their leader had bungled himself into an impasse.

But it was too late. The tellers completed the tale of votes and handed the lists to Mr. Speaker. He stood up to announce the result:

'Ayes in favour of the Hon. the Prime Minister's Neutrality Motion—67.

Noes, in favour of the motion to enter the war—80.

The noes have it.'

We had won by a majority of thirteen.

It is possible that General Hertzog might have secured a small majority had it not been for his blundering tactics in eulogizing Hitler and had it not been for the forceful and powerful speech by General Smuts in reply which brought round many waverers.

The decision was quietly received for during the count we had sent a whispered message to our side, 'Men, don't rub it in—let there be no gloating.' We felt it was too grave a crisis for noisy demonstrations and now all the Members filed out, most of them deep in thought, for the full significance of what had taken place had scarcely come home to them as yet. Firstly, it meant that we were at war with Germany and that we might soon be at war with the Italians.

It meant too that General Hertzog was beaten and that he would be obliged to hand over the government of the country to General Smuts.

Only that morning General Hertzog had called on the Governor-General, Sir Patrick Duncan, to tell him that he was introducing a neutrality motion and that he had a majority for it in the House. Now, a few hours later, he went to Government House to resign his office after having been Prime Minister of the Union for fifteen years. With all his faults, we were sorry for him, but we rejoiced that General Smuts was at the head of affairs once more and that South Africa would have his wisdom to guide us instead of our being at the whim of a man who, though possessed of great



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qualities, was too obstinate and too erratic and illogical to be relied on in times like these.

The Governor-General immediately called upon General Smuts to form a new Cabinet. From the voting in the House it was clear that we held a majority only by the grace of the Dominionites, the Labour Members and the Native Representatives, all of whom had sunk their party differences in the common cause. Therefore General Smuts decided to create a National Government.

By Wednesday, September 6th, his task was complete. The new Cabinet was constituted as follows:

1. Prime Minister and Minister of Defence—General Smuts.
2. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs—myself.
3. Minister of Finance—Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, next to General Smuts the finest brain we have in the Union.
4. Minister of Agriculture—Colonel Collins. A Boer War veteran under the late General Botha.
5. Minister of Justice—Dr. Colin Steyn, like myself, son of a former Republican President.
6. Minister of Railways—Mr. Claude Sturrock, a canny Scotsman.
7. Minister of Lands—Senator Conroy, of Irish and Afrikaans descent.
8. Posts and Telegraphs—Mr. Clarkson, from Natal.
9. Interior—Mr. Harry Lawrence, a brilliant young English-speaking South African.
10. Commerce and Industries—Mr. Stuttaford, English-born; merchant-prince from Capetown.
11. Minister of Mines—Colonel Stallard, leader of the Dominion Party.
12. Minister of Labour—Mr. Walter Madeley, who has for many years headed the Labour Party in South Africa.
13. Minister without Portfolio—Major Piet van der Byl. Dutch South African with a fine record in the last war.

All this may sound small beer to the outside world but to South Africa it was a mighty event, as vital to us as were the stones to the frogs in the fable, and the country rocked on its foundations.

The Nationalists accused us of having lured them into a trap, huge demonstrations were organized and for a week or two there



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was danger of another rebellion such as we had coped with in 1914.

Nonetheless, though our political activities might seem insignificant to onlookers from a distance the fact remains that if the Union had stood aside it would have been a serious blow to the solidarity of the Commonwealth and to its morale.

On Wednesday, September 6th, the newly-constituted Cabinet waited on the Governor-General and we were sworn of office, after which we left for the Transvaal to take up our duties at Pretoria. Our first task was to build up an army, for during the years that General Hertzog was Prime Minister and Mr. Pirow Minister of Defence, our forces had existed on paper only. General Smuts very soon put a different complexion on affairs and so eager was the response to his call for volunteers that in the months that now followed no less than 130,000 recruits flocked to the colours.

The Nationalists who comprise nearly forty per cent of our European population stood sullenly aloof, otherwise the number would have been nearly doubled; but in spite of their abstention we have to-day the strongest army South Africa has ever put into the field and our men, including John and Michael, streamed north to the defence of Kenya and the other territories of Central Africa.

## II

About a fortnight after our return to Pretoria, I was at work in my office one morning when the telephone bell rang. General Smuts's private secretary was at the other end; he said the Prime Minister wished to see me.

I strolled along the stone-flagged corridors of the Union Buildings, idly speculating as to why the General had sent for me and I told myself he wished, no doubt, to discuss some matter concerning my Department. I little knew that I was going off on the most interesting journey I have ever made. General Smuts was at his desk when I entered. He is a man of few words. He said, 'Take a chair and read this.' It was a cable from the Prime Minister of Britain, Mr. Chamberlain, and it invited General Smuts, or his next in command, to attend a conference in London to discuss plans with delegates from all the Dominions for the joint conduct of the war.

Having read the document I looked up and asked, 'You wish me to go?' He nodded. That was all that passed between us and a few days later Mr. Cooper and I took the air.



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We flew to Durban and after inspecting the coastal defences we set out on the long flight to England. We travelled in a Sunderland flying-boat, reaching Delagoa Bay in two hours fifteen minutes. We made inland across Natal and Zululand. To the right we passed St. Lucia lake and in the distance was Kosi Bay and all Maputo-land that I knew so well. On our left was my hippo sanctuary of Inyameti.

At Lourenço Marques were several German ships that had run for shelter. After refuelling we went on, crossing the Pungwe River delta, vast swamps and winding channels and at Beira, our next halt, saw more German ships at anchor with British cruisers out-side to watch their movements. German sailors shuffled through the streets looking bored and miserable.

We reached Mozambique by dusk and we spent the night on a houseboat moored off the island. There was a magnificent German liner, the *Watussi*, lying inshore. After we left she broke bounds, but near Cape Point she was sighted by a South African aeroplane and ordered to make for False Bay. She scuttled herself and now she lies on the bottom of the sea not far from our old fishing grounds where John and Michael and I used to cast our lines with Uncle Jim.

That evening as we sat in the saloon of the houseboat listening to the wireless, news came through that the *Royal Oak* had been torpedoed with the loss of eight hundred lives—it was like an echo of the first weeks in the last war.

On 15th October, we took off from Mozambique at four-fifteen a.m. and flew to Lindi, to Dar-es-Salaam, to Mombasa and thence cross-country to Kisumu. On our way we passed the Rufigi and other deltas—the German cruiser *Königsberg* was still lying on her side, in the mud since 1916.

The colour of the sea over the coral reefs was unbelievably beautiful. Flying over Zanzibar I descried the hulk of the Sultan's gunboat where she had been sunk and where I saw her in 1902. From Mombasa to Kisumu is about three hundred and fifty miles. We saw Voi and Taveta, known from the former campaign, but Kilimanjaro was invisible beneath a vast blanket of clouds.

On 16th October we journeyed from Kisumu via Lake Victoria Nyanza to Fort Bell, thence to Rejaf, crossing and recrossing the Nile above and below its entry and exit to and from Lake Albert. Great swamps and sudd country spread out below us.



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From Rejaf, the Nile at times a long way to the right, were great plains, and then desert country. Then from Malakal to Khartoum. As a boy I had devoured Father Ohrwalder's account and Slatin Pasha's account and Churchill's *River War*, about the Mahdi and the Khalifate, so I was the more interested at what I saw.

On 17th October, we went from Khartoum to Wadi-Halfa and from there non-stop to Cairo. I was carrying important despatches for General Wavell, then Commander-in-Chief of the Near East, and we met on a houseboat on the river. He had with him a glittering staff and I travelled in flannels and Norfolk tweeds, so I must have looked somewhat incongruous; but we held a conference and he offered to send me on to England in a warship.

I thought, however, that the air was faster, and I promised to jettison any compromising documents into the Mediterranean should it become necessary. We flew from Alexandria to Crete on the eighteenth and from there to Athens and Corfu. The next day we travelled from Corfu to Rome in three hours sixteen minutes and from Rome to Marseilles in two hours fifty-nine minutes, seeing Elba and Corsica below.

In walking down the Cannabière and by the docks, I noticed an occasional swastika on the walls and there were posters with '*à bas la guerre*' and other anti-government slogans which did not look healthy. Later, in Paris, I was to see even more disturbing evidence of how France was riddled and divided by political enmities.

From Marseilles we flew up along the Spanish frontier, the Pyrenees well to our left. Civilian planes had to keep below 2,000 feet under a new war regulation so we had a wonderful view of the lovely country.

We passed over or within sight of Arles, Nîmes, Beziers, Toulouse, then along the course of the river Garonne to lac Biscaross, not far from Bordeaux. We landed on the surface of the lake for fuel and then took off on a non-stop flight across the Bay of Biscay, Cap Nazaire, Belle Ile, etc., across parts of Brittany and Normandy, Rennes and Brest, if possible even more beautiful country than the south of France, and so over the English Channel to sit down on Southampton water at last. Signs of war were on every hand, civilians carrying gas masks and the streets full of soldiers and sailors and marines.

We took train to London, arriving there in a complete black-out.



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On our way up, we had found that Alexandria and Marseilles were darkened during the night, but their efforts were child's play compared to the London black-outs, so opaque that one literally could not see an inch and it was necessary to walk with outstretched arms to avoid cannoning into posts and pillar boxes and people.

At the railway station I was met by the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Anthony Eden and Admiral Bromley, feeling their way across the platform with the help of electric torches which I found during my stay in England to be indispensable after nightfall. I had made acquaintance with the Duke of Devonshire when he was on a lion hunt near Sandringham six months before and throughout my visit he showed me a great deal of kindness.

In stygian darkness Mr. Cooper and I were driven to Grosvenor House where I had lived on my previous sojourn and now there was an even more palatial suite at my disposal.

Next morning I looked out through my window on to Hyde Park and a clear sunny day. There were gun pits among the trees and scores of anchored balloons swung overhead like silver fish in the sky.

In spite of all these warlike preparations there was an air of unreality about the situation. The Germans had overwhelmed Poland in three weeks, but since then there was a strange calm. Everyone had expected that France would immediately be attacked and that from the very start heavy air raids would be launched on Great Britain, more particularly on London. So certain was the government of this that nearly a million children had been evacuated to the country; elaborate arrangements had been prepared to remove all civil service departments to the Provinces; underground shelters had been excavated; churches, museums and art galleries had sent their treasures away and even the stained glass windows from cathedrals and guildhalls were taken down and stored in vaults, and every building in London was heavily sandbagged against bomb splinters. But, thus far, not a single German aeroplane had attempted to approach the capital and save for an occasional hostile machine over the Firth of Forth the war remained what the comic papers called a '*sitzkrieg*' instead of the '*blitzkrieg*' that was anticipated. So much was this the case that during the weeks I spent in London I gathered the impression that people were becoming bored and I even heard the view expressed that it would be rather a good thing if the Germans did bomb the place—it would liven things up.



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There was little warning of the wrath that was yet to come, but during all the time I was in England and from what I saw in France I was puzzled and uneasy, though I could not say why.

To me the first session of the joint war council was an outstanding event.

Mr. Chamberlain was in the chair. He was a son of that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain whom my brothers and I had looked on as a Corsican Ogre in years gone by and I thought of the strange turn of the wheel that had brought me to sit with him in this council at the nerve-centre of the British Empire. Among the others who attended were Mr. Winston Churchill, Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, General Ironside, Mr. Anthony Eden, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Halifax, Lord Chatfield and other notabilities.

The British are a phlegmatic race. Mr. Chamberlain opened the proceedings with a few words of welcome, then passed straight to business. Decisions to build great armadas by sea and air, to raise huge military forces and to expend thousands of millions of money were arrived at with never a raised voice and with no sign of flurry or excitement. It might have been a meeting of some suburban county council discussing the rates.

I could not help comparing their quiet unperturbed demeanour with the account General Smuts had given us of the Italian War Council he had been present at in 1918 when everyone shouted and gibbered and gesticulated at everyone else like so many madmen.

During the time I was in England I sat at many another conference at No. 10 Downing Street, though on some occasions our meetings were held at the War Office, the Admiralty, and elsewhere.

These gatherings of necessity occupied most of my attention but I had much other work to do, including negotiations for the purchase both here and in America of guns and munitions and aircraft for our army in South Africa.

In addition I gave broadcasts, interviewed press correspondents, went to banquets, kept innumerable appointments at South Africa House with people who wished to see me on innumerable subjects, visited naval ports and shipping, munition factories, arsenals and training camps and at weekends I was generally able to get away for a rest.



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I spent a few days with the Duke of Devonshire and his family on his Chatsworth estate. The mansion is perhaps the finest in Britain, but it was now turned into a girls' school to house evacuee children from Manchester and we stayed in a small factor's cottage a mile or two away.

I spent another weekend with Admiral Tottenham and his wife at their home on the Isle of Wight. Other weekends I went to Cambridge, Windsor Castle, and Marlborough.

I kept a hurried diary of which I give a few condensed extracts. If anyone thinks there are too many earls and titles 'tis no fault of mine.

To Harrow, Boxhill, Eton.

Met Lord Vivian whom we had wounded in the Boer War.

United Services Club with General Ironside, and Lord Hankey. Long discussions at South Africa House and at Dominions Office with Anthony Eden and Duke of Devonshire *re* Swaziland and Bechuanaland Protectorates.

Broadcast in English, German, French and Dutch at the B.B.C.

Attended to hear Mr. Chamberlain's weekly statement in the House of Commons.

Mr. Churchill took me round the bomb-proof vaults that have been constructed beneath the Admiralty against air raids.

Lunched at Savoy with Mr. Anthony Eden, Lord Halifax, etc.

Lunch at 11 Downing Street with Sir John Simon and Mr. Strakosch, the financier. Through the window saw Mr. Chamberlain feeding his birds at No. 10 next door.

Attended government luncheon at Savoy. Mr. Chamberlain, Churchill and most of the British Cabinet.

Lord Mayor's banquet at Mansion House.

Zeesen broadcast attacks General Smuts and myself calling us flunkeys of the Empire. I reply over the B.B.C. in German to say that in South Africa we are no one's lackeys for we are free to do and say what we please—the flunkeys are the Germans who have allowed Hitler and his gangsters to deprive them of their liberties.

News of German pocket battleship *Deutschland* or *Graf Spee* at large in N. Atlantic.

Inspected Portsmouth naval base. Dined with Mr. Churchill at Admiralty House.

Dined with Sir Nevile Henderson. His hatred of von Ribbentrop



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so intense that when he started to tell us of his experiences as Ambassador in Germany, one of the guests quietly removed plates and glasses and cutlery out of reach for fear he would sweep them to the floor in his vehemence.

Dined at Buckingham Palace with the King and Queen and later had several audiences with him.

To Woolwich Arsenal; to Aldershot to see the training camps. To Air Command centre twenty miles from London. All underground, in bomb-proof chambers. Lunched at White's Club with Lord Weir (War Supplies) and Lord Harry McGowan (Imperial Chemicals).

Gave a reception at South Africa House to more than five hundred guests with all of whom I had to shake hands and say a few words of welcome.

New form of magnetic mine laid by Germans in Thames Estuary. Saw Mr. Chamberlain about this. He was laid up with gout. He said he was in agony and as he had never drunk a glass of port in his life it was grossly unfair, but, with a faint smile, 'Don't worry about the shipping losses; we shall overcome this menace as we have overcome many another.'

At Brooks Club with Lord Trenchard who asked me to support him in demanding an assault on the Siegfried line—'all nonsense this sitting still and waiting for the Germans to attack.'

Dined Carlton with Mr. Attlee, the Parliamentary Labour Leader.

Conference with Hore-Belisha *re* guns and aeroplanes for South Africa.

To theatre with Mr. Waterson, our High Commissioner.

At Australia House: meeting with Casey and Bruce.

Lunched at Inner Temple with Lord Roach and other judges.

With Sir Hanbury Williams at Windsor Castle.

I developed a huge mail and I spent hours every day dictating replies to the staff that was placed at my disposal at Africa House. And I was called on by many old friends and called on them in turn. I met interesting men and women, and my sojourn in London, though it entailed hard work, was an absorbing experience.

Now came another outstanding interlude. It was arranged that the representatives on the War Council from India and the Dominions should visit the front line across the Channel. Mr. Anthony



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Eden led our company; the others were Mr. Casey, Australia; Mr. Crerar, Canada; Mr. Frazer, New Zealand; Sir Zafrulla Kahn, India; myself for South Africa, and some military attachés.

On 9th November we sailed from Newhaven to Dieppe at night on a zig-zag course; all was well. Next day we went by road from Dieppe to Paris where we lodged at the famous Hotel Crillon near the Arc de Triomphe, mostly covered with sandbags.

At the moment of writing, the Hotel Crillon is occupied by German officers, and France lies in the dust, but for the time being all seemed well and not one of us dreamed of the catastrophe, though again I felt uneasy.

Everyone seemed immersed in party politics and even the staff at the hotel would rush out to buy the latest newspapers on the streets; then they stood arguing in the dining-room while we patiently hoped for breakfast. The morning after our arrival we motored out to Vincennes, an ancient fortress, now the G.H.Q. of the French armies: where General Gamelin, the Commander-in-Chief, met us—a cheerful stocky man of about sixty-five, fresh-complexioned as a schoolgirl.

He struck me as a highly-trained, intelligent man who, as with most French officers, had made a lifelong study of his profession at arms. I inquired about the Duc d'Enghien who was executed here in Napoleon's time and he took me to see the very spot in a moat where this judicial murder had taken place.

He spoke bitterly of the situation, saying that they had constructed the Maginot Line at vast expense, but the Belgian Government had raised objections to a continuation along their frontier, so it was only half a bulwark. Yet now that they were threatened with invasion, the Belgians were so intimidated by German threats that they refused to indulge in staff talks and he prophesied that either British or French troops would have to move forward of their works to go to their assistance. His prophecy was only too true.

One evening we dined with French Cabinet Ministers and Party leaders at the British Embassy. Again I was puzzled. Reynaud, a little game-cock of a fellow, was the only one who inspired me with any confidence. Laval and the rest seemed to me mere intriguers and logrollers. I was buttonholed by them in turn and I was warned not to confide in the others. There was such an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion that they appeared to hate each other more than they feared the Germans.



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I remember thinking to myself that if, in South Africa, a Cabinet were imaginable between General Smuts, General Hertzog, Dr. Malan, Colonel Stallard, the wild young racialists of the Nationalist wing, plus a dash of communists and a few socialists there would be reproduced in miniature something of what was evident on a larger scale here to-night. It did not augur well, but I was insufficiently versed to draw conclusions, though I was bewildered by what I saw and heard.

We had two air raid alarms at the Crillon and were taken down the lift to a huge cellar stacked with many thousands of cobwebbed bottles of wine (all no doubt imbibed by the Germans since then).

From Paris we travelled north via Peronne across country I knew from the last war. We passed through Masnières which I had helped to recapture when I commanded the 7th Shrops, and we stayed a night at Arras where I had lain wounded in the Hospice de St. Jean in 1917.

Next morning we proceeded to Habacque, an old château which housed Lord Gort, the British Commander-in-Chief and his G.H.Q. and we spent a few days visiting the front line towards Lille.

Casey, the Australian Cabinet Minister, and I were driven in a car by the Duke of Gloucester, brother of the King. Casey, like myself, had served in these parts of old. We shook our heads at what we saw. The new line, under hurried construction, seemed an amateurish affair. The trenches were shallow, the concrete domes the French had built at intervals of eight hundred yards, contained only a single anti-tank rifle apiece and the loopholes faced sideways with no frontal view. We thought the psychological effect on troops unable to see ahead of them would shake their morale, and taking it all round we did not like the look of things.

We watched the soldiers at work in their new battledress and we listened to Lord Gort and General Montgomery and others as they told us of their plans to hold the enemy.

We were taken over Mont de Bouvines, an obsolete fortress dating from 1870, now held by British troops and we watched a maze of muddy trenches and tank traps being haphazardly scooped out by steam shovels.

Then we were entertained at Lille by the Préfet and the Maire. I saw a monument to French civilians executed in 1914, with the inscription, *A nos fusillés.*



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A hostile machine came high overhead dropping pamphlets. One of them was brought to me. It showed two scenes. In the first a British and a French soldier stood with poised arms as if to dive together into a lurid pool of blood. In the next the French soldier had gone in with a splash while the British soldier had remained on the bank derisively sneering at his submerged companion.

We attended a military concert at Arras. Lord Gort and his staff were present. Watching the faces of the row upon row of soldiers in the dimly lit hall I wondered what the future held for them.

To Cambrai, St. Quentin, Laon, Rheims and Verdun, replete with memories of the last war. Then we halted at Metz in Lorraine on the River Moselle.

There was a war-market at which patriotic Frenchwomen handed in their jewellery for sale and I purchased bracelets and brooches for the common cause. The newspapers were printed in German and the owner of a kiosk said to me, 'Unsere Sprache ist Deutsch, aber die Herzen sind französisch'; and a young officer told me that round here they liked the Germans and got on well with them. It was rather confusing.

We visited several British air squadrons behind the French Army, their Spitfires cunningly hidden in copses and woods. The aerodromes from above must have been indistinguishable, as all the fields looked alike.

In their quarters I spoke to a young New Zealander who the previous day had shot down a Messerschmidt. I asked him what crew the German machines carried—he said he didn't know. I asked how that was, seeing that they could have counted them when the plane crashed. There was silence for a moment and he and his companions looked embarrassed; then he said, 'You see, when a machine hits the ground from 27,000 feet, there isn't much left.'

All they had salvaged was a bent propeller blade and half a machine-gun. The rest was marmalade, as one of them put it.

Another pilot told me that two or three days before he was right on a Messerschmidt's tail and about to kill it when a shell from a French anti-aircraft gun shot his propeller away. His cock-pit window was blinded with oil but he managed to land by peeping through a gash in the side.

These pilots told me with a grin that the French were 'one up on them'. The British anti-aircraft batteries had shot down only



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nine French machines whereas the French batteries had downed ten British planes in various dog fights against the German air-arm.

We entered the Maginot Line at Mont de Welshe. When first I read of its construction some years ago I thought it would soon become as obsolete as the Chinese wall, for tourists to gape at.

But having been within its entrails I changed my mind. If one can visualize a hundred and fifty miles of battleships buried bow to stern with only their turrets visible it will give some idea of this gigantic undertaking. It must have cost the French people as much as their Navy cost the British. The tragedy is that it did not run the entire length of the frontier.

As far as it was built it was impregnable to frontal assault and indeed it was never taken, for the Germans wisely made no attempt to carry it; but to-day the Great Maginot Line is useless and deserted, for tourists to gape at after all.

During the time we spent up and down it, we saw heavy guns moved from the bowels of the earth at the touch of a finger; we watched ghostly electric trains running silent along endless corridors, with men and munitions, and we were hospitably entertained in bastions and bays.

Yet there was an air of unreality. I remembered the last war, with never a moment without shells howling across or machine-guns rattling away. Now there was deathly quiet and I did not hear a single shot fired in France though powerful armies stood face to face.

We were allowed to lower and raise the guns by pressing levers and swivels much as a child would be allowed to switch on the lights or press the button of the hooter in a motor-car, but when I suggested that I should be permitted to pull a trigger and fire a shell or two at the German lines across the way the French officers gazed at me as if I had uttered a blasphemy.

It was uncanny. French officers told me if they sent six shells over the way, exactly six shells were returned and when they unloaded petrol supplies at night the Germans turned on their searchlights to assist the soldiers at their work. It didn't make sense to me, but I think Hitler was beguiling the French into security on the Maginot Line while he was preparing his thrust at the weaker defences up north.

Before we left, Mr. Anthony Eden and I were made honorary



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members of the garrison of Mont de Welshe and we were invested with badges. We returned to England via Arras.

From a pock-marked tablet I remembered seeing in Arras in 1917 this city has been devastated a score of times in the past. There was little enough left when I was there then but it had been rebuilt. Now it is once more a heap of ruins from all accounts.

We stayed over at Boulogne, the port of entry for most of the British Army in the Great War. It was unchanged save for a majestic statue of Britannia on the sea-wall.

There were frequent air raid alarms which seemed to cause no alarm for everyone strolled unconcerned, and once I saw a number of Spitfires streak across the sky chasing a German machine out of sight. The préfet of Boulogne with whom I was conversing at the time gave them a perfunctory look and said 'les aviateurs allemands ont une série complète de photographies de notre ville'.

I listened-in to Zeesen that night and curiously enough there was mention of Boulogne. It said that while the Germans did not intend to attack French cities and towns from the air, Boulogne was to be razed to the ground because it had become a British port where troops and supplies were being landed and it was to be mercilessly bombed. To-day it is the other way about for Boulogne has become a German base and the R.A.F. are mercilessly pounding it.

We embarked for Dover by daylight escorted by Destroyer H.30 frisking around like a fox terrier.

As soon as we arrived in London, Mr. Casey and I asked for an interview with the Prime Minister.

Word must have reached the British Cabinet that we were dissatisfied with what we had seen for it came to our ears that the military side objected to our speaking to Mr. Chamberlain and there was talk of 'interfering Colonials'. However, we insisted, and in the end we were called to 10 Downing Street.

Mr. Chamberlain was seated alone at the great table in the historic room in which, I was told, war had been decided against Napoleon, against Russia, against our South African Republics and against Germany in 1914 and again in this struggle.

I opened by describing the Gort Line and its French equivalent and of our experiences in that area during the last war. I said, 'Sir, if you will pardon my saying so, the Germans will go through there like a knife through cheese.'



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Casey followed and we expressed our conviction that the line without adequate protection during long-continued shellfire would be a shambles.

Mr. Chamberlain was somewhat vague and aloof. He said, 'Gentlemen, my military advisers tell me we cannot construct shelters in muddy soil and shells bursting in damp ground don't do much harm.' We argued the matter, but we made no progress and the Germans did go through that line like a knife through cheese.

## III

I resumed my activities at South Africa House in Trafalgar Square and attended many sittings of the War council at Downing Street.

One morning, Lord Trenchard and Lord Vivian took me to lunch at White's, one of the oldest clubs in England. After they had gone I fell into conversation with Sir Hubert Gough and Mr. Dulanty, the High Commissioner for the Irish Free State. Sir Hubert Gough had commanded the 5th Army in France when the Germans broke the British line in the spring of 1918 and as I was severely wounded during the withdrawal, I listened with keen interest to his account of the disaster. I am bound to say that I agree with him as to the shabbiness of the treatment he received at the hands of the War Office for what was not his fault but that of the Higher Command.

He is an Irishman who dearly loves his own country, but he realizes that with all her legitimate grievances against the English she can only solve her problems by remaining within the British Empire. As I am a South African who dearly loves my own country and who realizes that with all our legitimate grievances against the English we can only solve our problems by remaining inside the Empire, we met on common ground.

Dulanty was an Irishman of intermediate type. He possessed a wide range of general knowledge and a deep love of English literature and of English poetry. But he had been reared on tales of British atrocities from the days of Queen Elizabeth and Cromwell and the autobiography of Wolfe Tone and the hanging of Robert Emmet and other Irish patriots of varying calibre and he held forth to me of Dublin Castle, the Easter shootings and the Black and Tans.



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I pointed out that a hundred years ago they hanged a dozen men a day at Tyburn Cross for minor offences, and added, 'You Irish blame on the British what you should blame on the barbarity of those times.' I told him I had seen a list of Courts Martial at the Cape in 1806 in which scores of British soldiers were condemned to be hanged for petty contraventions, but any Irishman who was executed on similar charges was canonized as a national martyr. He considered this for a moment, then he slapped his knee and exclaimed, 'By God, perhaps there may be something in that.'

In further talk I mentioned that the German radio from Zeesen had been vilifying General Smuts and myself as flunkeys and lackeys of the Empire. Dulanty said, 'You know, when I read General Smuts's speeches and heard your broadcasts I said to myself: those fellows have been nobbled by the British.'

I replied, 'Mr. Dulanty, no one can nobble us. We are free men in a free country and we stand by the British because we believe that with so many predatory powers seeking whom they may devour our safety lies within the Commonwealth; and we believe that a United South African people is only attainable within its shelter.'

I then went on to say, somewhat ponderously perhaps, that in my opinion Mr. de Valera had fatally blundered. He should have realized that a united Ireland was more important than constitutional academics and that as with us in the South, a united Ireland could be achieved only inside the Empire. Had South Ireland stood by the North in the present crisis, partition would have fallen away and a united Irish nation would have come into being at last. Once this was accomplished there was time enough to sit down and consider whether they wished to secede and in all probability by that time they would not think it worth while.

Finally I asserted that Irish and South African problems were akin. Ireland was severed geographically, South Africa was divided racially. Along the line we were following was a reasonable chance of nationhood, but the road the Irish Free State was travelling would take them farther and farther from their goal. Dulanty heard me out and after sitting in thought he jumped up and cried, 'You've got to go and speak to "Dev."'

I protested that Mr. de Valera might refuse to see me, but he said, 'You leave it to me, you leave it to me,' and we parted on this note.



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Two days later, as I sat in my office in South Africa House, the telephone rang and a trunk call came through from Dublin with an invitation from Mr. de Valera to come and see him. An aeroplane was provided and next morning Mr. Cooper and I left Heston on a non-stop flight to Dublin, with Holyhead and Anglesey and St. George's Channel below. This was the first time I had been here since 1919. The place looked shabbier than ever and it did not seem to me that Ireland was prospering.

We were put up at the famous Shelborne Hotel as state guests and that afternoon Mr. de Valera and I met in his office. We talked for nearly three hours. It was agreed that our discussions were to be confidential, so I shall not touch upon the subject matter of the interview beyond saying that I put before him very much the same views I had expressed to Mr. Dulanty and he on his side stated the case for Ireland as he saw it.

I judged him to be a man of high character, but professorial and doctrinaire. He reminded me of General Hertzog—both of them are gentlemen but very difficult gentlemen, and they are prone to sentimentalize on the glories of the past and the traditions of their race to the exclusion of more practical considerations.

During our interview we were closeted alone, but that evening I had an opportunity of meeting the other Ministers at a banquet that was given in a block of buildings which under the former régime had been known as the Castle. Mr. de Valera presided. He was in a genial mood, though he lacks a sense of humour. He drank nothing but water and he ate sparingly.

The rest of the Cabinet was less austere. I hope I am not doing them an injustice, but from their talk, which grew livelier as we proceeded, I gathered that the chief qualification for an Irish portfolio has something to do with the number of men shot by the incumbent during the late troubles.

They had many tales of ambushes, the bombing of troops and police barracks, the killing of British officers, and burnings and executions and the sorry happenings of recent years. But with it all, I sensed an undercurrent of uneasiness. Like our own Nationalists in South Africa, they were sincere racial fanatics but I think they felt that the Irish Free State was not playing an heroic part in sheltering behind the British and refusing to help them in a struggle in which their own future was equally involved. However, I listened to much high-flown talk, for the Irishman is quite as



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voluble as we Afrikaners when we break loose on the virtues of our people and our past.

At one stage, I said to Mr. de Valera, 'You know sir, we Dutch in South Africa are very like the Irish.' He asked what I meant. I told him that, like the Irish, we were always hiving off into separate factions and were eternally quarrelling among ourselves. 'Would you believe it, that with a war on our hands, we are split into three separate parties down South?' 'Three,' said Mr. de Valera wryly. 'You are lucky; we are split into twenty-four.'

Mr. de Valera and I had agreed beforehand that with our exhausting conference of that afternoon we would retire early, so at ten o'clock we broke up. He took his departure in a taxi-cab and I was glad to think I was going to bed. As I was about to leave, an official came up to say that one of the Cabinet Ministers who had been unable to attend the dinner would like a word with me to discuss mutual economic problems.

I was sleepy and fatigued, but as I thought he was awaiting me in an adjacent room and that it would be a matter of ten minutes or so, I heaved a sigh and went along. Instead of being in the next room, he was twelve miles away on a country estate, and poor Cooper and I were motored out, mostly by farm roads shut in by stone walls on either side.

At length we reached our destination and as we came up the drive there was a mansion lit up and at the entrance the Minister with an hilarious group of friends, welcomed us in. It was a night of wassail. Never a word was spoken of mutual economic problems, but there was singing of patriotic songs, poems about old Ireland and fierce amber-coloured whisky. There were ladies too, who warbled sweetly of bayonets gleaming at the rise of the moon; the Harp that Once; and the Island of Sorrow.

Dawn was on its way and the birds were twittering by the time the consortium ended and it was nearly breakfast time before we got back to Dublin.

I was awakened at ten feeling as I had felt after that Hogmanay nicht with the Scots Fusiliers twenty years ago, and again I kept a stiff upper lip as we were taken round museums and art galleries.

One of the collections we saw consisted of uniforms and other relics used during the Easter rising. Among these were some rifles that had been fished up from the *Aud*, the German ship that was to have landed arms for Sir Roger Casement's attempted invasion.



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These rifles were obsolete single-loading Mausers of 1870 such as they had armed their native levies with in East Africa and it threw some light on the sincerity of their help to the Irish cause that they should fob them off with these antiquated weapons.

Our visit ending, we flew back via Liverpool where we landed. From Liverpool to Heston I slept all the way. Mr. Cooper said it was the roughest journey he had ever experienced, but I was oblivious.

## IV

I now resumed work in London and I was kept busier than ever for the time was approaching to return to South Africa.

My diary says that I dined once more with the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace, and that I broadcast again at the B.B.C. in English, French, Dutch and German, which one of the staff told me was a record for one speaker.

I attended a final series of War Councils, had interviews with Mr. Churchill, General Carr, Mr. Hore-Belisha and others, and then four or five days before I was due to start home the Portuguese Ambassador called on me with an official invitation from his Government to proceed to Lisbon to talk over matters affecting our joint interests in Southern Africa.

I cabled the offer to General Smuts who immediately approved of my acceptance, and needless to say I was delighted at the prospect. I have always liked the Portuguese, and having received courtesy and kindness from them in their Colonial territories, I looked forward to seeing their home country.

I spent my final days in England bidding farewell to friends and acquaintances; I said good-bye to Mr. Chamberlain and other members of the British Cabinet and on a given morning Mr. Cooper and I were flown from Heston to Paris.

As we crossed the Channel there was a convoy steaming along, escorted by destroyers and protected from air attacks by Spitfires racing overhead—the most warlike scene of the war, thus far.

We stayed over in Paris to get our passports and, accompanied by one of our legation officials, we did such sightseeing as was possible under existing conditions.

I paid six francs to view Napoleon's tomb in the Invalides and when I got to the circular balustrade, the entire tomb was covered



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with sandbags and there was nothing to see except, in the distance, the concierge who had sold me the ticket. He had a broad grin on his face.

We motored out to Versailles, walked through Père Lachaise looking for the grave of Héloise and Abelard, and listened to Maurice Chevalier and Josephine Baker, the famous negro actress, in a fifth-rate comedy, at a fifth-rate theatre (the others were closed down).

In order to reach Lisbon one had to go by rail via Spain and therefore, when all was ready, we started off one evening from the Gare d'Austerlitz. Travelling through the night we found ourselves at Hendaye by dawn, a small coastal town not more than a few hundred yards from the Spanish border.

As the railway bridge across the river had been blown up during the civil war, we disembarked. We had no trouble on the French side. After replying to a few questions we were allowed to stow our baggage in an ancient taxi and we trundled down to where a temporary wooden bridge spanned the stream.

Half-way across was a barrier with scores of Spanish soldiers and officials, wearing glazed cocked hats and long cloaks. Whilst in Paris I had taken the precaution to obtain a document from the Spanish Embassy requesting all and sundry to facilitate my journey. The minute was an imposing one with large red seals and with General Franco's name in heavy lettering at the top. I thought all difficulties would vanish at its appearance, but things worked out differently. When I exhibited the parchment, it was carefully scrutinized and handed round by customs officers and soldiers for voluble discussion. Then it was taken away for half an hour to some military post during which time we were ordered not to leave the car, and to make sure, a number of soldiers with bayoneted rifles stood guard and several climbed into the car and sat themselves down beside us. At length we were taken to another bureau for further questioning, then to Irun, a town mostly in ruins, where we were handed, still closely guarded, from one official to another for interrogation. I had several times to produce the ambassadorial *exequatur* and I had to sign numberless forms specifying my origin, destination, and reasons for entering the country, etc., etc. My inquisition lasted from seven o'clock in the morning until long after midday by which time, I suppose, I was given up for a fool and a dolt and was at length released.



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I succeeded in hiring a car which took us to San Sebastian from which town we managed that night to obtain accommodation on a south-bound train.

Next day every time there was a halt, the passengers were commanded to line up on the platform and once again we were questioned, our baggage opened for examination, and our money counted.

It was a humiliating business, and as we journeyed past cities famed in history—Salamanca, Alcantara, Valladolid—I felt like hating the Spaniards; but I remembered the ordeal they had been passing through and I said to myself they were probably living on their nerves and one should make allowances.

At all events, late that afternoon, at Valencia, as I was once more queued up for another interrogation, a train drew in from the opposite direction. It consisted of an engine, a dining car and a luxurious coach and it had been sent by the Portuguese Government to meet me. Highly placed officers were on board and after they had spoken to the minions on the platform a sudden change came over the scene. Now, as we walked along, the Spanish officials, from having been arrogant and hectoring, became obsequious, and they bowed and scraped and saluted as we climbed into our new quarters.

The train was backed, and in a few minutes we were speeding away to the Portuguese frontier under happier auspices. Instead of insults and lawless soldiery, we were in the company of gentlemen. Dr. Saldanha, their leader, was a direct descendant of the Portuguese navigator who had been the first to climb Table Mountain at the Cape in 1572 and the others were men of equal standing.

I was glad of it—on our joint Portuguese border in Southern Africa there is not a fort or a soldier and we have never quarrelled, and I liked to think that I was to represent my country among them.

We reached Lisbon at seven o'clock that evening. A surprise awaited me. I was met by the British Ambassador and by several members of the Portuguese Cabinet; the square outside the station was lined with thousands of troops and a multitude of onlookers. As I alighted a salute of guns boomed forth, the first time in my life I had been thus honoured, and as we emerged, I was greeted with vociferous cheering, the battalions saluted, and massed military bands came into action.



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I was put up at the Aviz Hotel, a marble palace originally built by some newspaper magnate—the most sumptuous place I have ever seen. I was assigned two reception rooms, study, bedroom, and a Roman bath almost big enough to swim in.

The days that followed were pleasant and active. I was fêted and banqueted; I was taken to Cintra, Rio Frio and other show places. I had dinner with President Carmona, a magnificent affair, and I had long conferences with Dr. Salazar, the man who re-created Portugal from the chaos of ten years ago; I sat in council with Dr. Machado and various Cabinet Ministers and with Sir Walford Selby, the British Ambassador; I saw the graves of Vasco da Gama, Bartholomew Diaz and Camoëns; I visited museums and art galleries and Moorish castles, the curious statue of Adamastor, the hall of coaches, historic buildings, cathedrals and many things of interest.

Everyone called me 'Your Excellency' or 'Votre Excéllence' a title I never got quite used to, but there was no escaping it, and etiquette demanded that as a state guest I was to walk on the right hand of any Minister or other dignitary who happened to be escorting me. Also, I was tipped that it was 'not done' to open the door of a motor-car myself—I was to wait until an attendant performed this office for me and only then was I free to step out.

During my stay in Lisbon, news came of stout-hearted defence by the Finns against Russia. I could see that Portugal viewed the European situation uneasily, but here too I was on a confidential errand so I cannot say more about my visit than that I was royally entertained and I formed what I hope will be lasting friendships in this pleasant country.

When my task was finished I had to think of returning to South Africa. In wartime it was not so easy. I could have returned by sea to England and from there to Capetown, but sailings were uncertain and I might be delayed for weeks. An alternative was to make for Gibraltar in the hope of being taken to Alexandria in some British warship and then by air up the Nile. This too was an uncertain route and Mr. Cooper worked out a more imaginative itinerary. He came to me with a suggestion, supported by maps and time-tables, that by doubling back through Spain via Madrid and Barcelona to Marseilles, we could board an Air-France machine to Algiers and then go across the Sahara Desert to Brazzaville, the capital of French Equatorial Africa.



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The idea appealed to me but I asked him how we were to get from Brazzaville to the Union. I thought he was stumped but he returned to the charge next day. He said our air mail plied from Windhoek in the south-west territory to Loanda in Portuguese West Africa and we could cable a request for a machine to fetch us. Acting on his advice a message was despatched to Pretoria and General Smuts wired to say that an aeroplane would be sent to meet me at the Congo river.

The Portuguese Government now very kindly placed a car at my disposal for the first leg of the journey to Marseilles and in order to avoid a repetition of the previous annoyance from Spanish soldiers and officious officials, Senhor Saldanha was deputed to accompany me. I invited Colonel Pienaar, our Minister Plenipotentiary, to join me and Mr. Cooper and Miguel, our driver, a queer old character who in his day had been an all-in wrestler of considerable fame, made up the party.

I took formal leave of President Carmona, Dr. Machado, the other Ministers, the British Ambassador (who was lying in bed with a broken jaw) and many other friends and at daybreak one morning we set out; we crossed the Tagus on a pontoon and travelling through the lovely Portuguese countryside reached the Spanish frontier by eleven a.m.

Thanks to Senhor Saldanha, the formalities of crossing into Spain took less than twenty minutes instead of eight hours as on the former occasion; and on behalf of the Union of South Africa I sent a long telegram to the President of Portugal thanking him and his administration for their kindness to me.

We went on. Soon we were passing through Badajoz with its famous breach where Sir George Grey's father was killed in 1806.

When this fortress was captured recently by Franco's troops there were, I was told, horrible scenes of massacre and executions.

Our road took us by Talavera and Merida, and we saw picturesque castles and towers dating from Moorish times and the ruins of Roman bridges and aqueducts. These parts were more or less unspoilt by the civil war, but everyone seemed poverty stricken and listless and I did not see a decently clad man, woman or child anywhere in Spain. Tea, coffee, sugar and bread were not to be had; shops were empty and the few cars we passed were incredibly



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dilapidated; as a rule their windows were broken and sacking was used instead of glass.

Once, as we were going through a town, one of these cars coming down a side street rammed us and smashed the rear mudguard of our Buick, to the despair of old Miguel. The driver of the offending museum-piece explained that he had no brakes at all so he had to descend any incline in low gear, a precaution he had omitted on this occasion.

At intervals were huge collections of derelict cars, buses and lorries, each about a thousand strong, and I was told that these had transported the local Red armies in their last stand near the frontier. They were too far gone for salvage.

Refugees were moving along the roads, pushing barrows and handcarts containing their belongings. They were Reds returning from Portugal where they had found sanctuary up to now. The weather was bitterly cold and I noticed that towards dark these unfortunate people halted in the lee of the stone walls round the fields for shelter from the wind and there they crouched and shivered through the night.

The country beyond Badajoz was more or less unscarred, but when we neared Madrid, the scene was changed. We crossed a snow-covered mountain chain and beyond that, towns and villages were in ruins; bridges had been destroyed and lines of trenches ran out of sight on either hand. The actual approaches to Madrid and the suburbs were heaps of rubble and we had to make frequent détours to avoid fallen masonry that blocked the road. The bridge over the Manzanes, the gateway to the capital, was lying in the water below, so we had to make a long turn with entire blocks burnt out; and there were deep craters where bombs had torn up the streets.

The people looked depressed and one sensed an undercurrent of hatred from their bitter looks as they eyed each other.

We spent a night at the Ritz, said once to have been the finest hotel in Europe, but now doors hung awry, there were no locks or latches, the carpets were worn and the whole place reeked of decay. Meals were served in a magnificently proportioned dining-room, but consisted chiefly of goats' meat—no bread, no sugar, milk, tea or coffee. Many of the guests were Moorish officers and there were Moorish troops on the streets.

A supporter of the Franco régime told me a grisly tale. He said



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during the first weeks of the troubles the Reds had seen red in Madrid. They killed every policeman they could find as these were considered to be hostile to the revolution. They were stripped and eviscerated and the naked corpses were hung on the flesh hooks of every butcher shop, exposed to public view beside the carcasses of cattle and sheep. He told me further that in the courtyard of the Cuartel de la Montagne (a military barracks) the Reds herded a hundred and twenty loyalist officers and machine-gunned the lot. Then they forced the city photographers to make pictures of the scene for distribution among the public.

In the evening paper was an account of the reburial that morning of one hundred and two Nationalist officers shot by the Reds at Almeida.

From Madrid we went to Saragossa. All along our route the villages were as completely ruined as those in the devastated zone in France during the Great War and shell-pitted trenches criss-crossed in every direction. These parts had been held by the Reds for three years and it looked as if the country was not yet pacified, for we met squadrons of cavalry on patrol and long convoys of mule carts driven by angry-looking peasants with soldiers in charge. We gathered that the troops were forcibly requisitioning supplies though they could not have been very successful as this area was largely derelict. Towards Saragossa we found the road crowded with military lorries, the drivers of which seemed to take a malignant pleasure in refusing our faster car the right of way. When we hooted for them to let us pass they would look back and seeing us, they deliberately started to zig-zag to prevent us from overtaking them, grinning at our furious shouts. So it is not surprising that we made slow progress.

We stopped at a military depot to replenish our petrol tank, and I watched the procedure. Lorry after lorry drew to the pumps and filled up, giving no chit or voucher, and so little supervision was exercised that each time the nozzle was withdrawn a gallon or two of petrol was squirted on the ground. A looker-on, probably an ex-Red, whispered to me that they were doing a roaring trade by filling and emptying and refilling their lorries and selling the petrol to civilians. When at last our turn came old Miguel took as many litres as the receptacle of his Buick would hold and when we paid and asked for a receipt the soldier at the handle glared angrily at us for trying to disturb the happy-go-lucky system in vogue.



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From Saragossa to Barcelona we went through country heavily fought over. The bridges were down, towns and villages were destroyed, and we saw fresh graveyards with hosts of wooden crosses like those I remembered behind the lines in France. The inhabitants of the region were chiefly anti-Franco. They looked downtrodden and resentful, but at a few kind words they would break into laughter and jokes.

At one place we were held up at a river. The bridge had been damaged but some workmen were repairing it. A score of military lorries were likewise held up, for the overseer refused to let them pass while he was jacking a sunken girder into place. Dr. Saldanha walked forward and explained to him that we were South Africans on our way to catch an aeroplane at Marseilles and if we were delayed we might miss the connection.

He was adamant at first, but after considering our predicament he gave way, though he said it might lose him his job. There came cat-calls and jeers from the military drivers who were not allowed to pass, but when I offered him five hundred francs as a solatium he refused with dignity, and I could only prevail on him to accept twenty francs for distribution among his workmen.

From Saragossa we continued to Barcelona on the Mediterranean coast. The place had been heavily battered during the disturbances and the sea front in especial was in ruins. From Barcelona, next day, we went north. At first the road runs almost on the beach for a number of miles and then it turns inland. All this country is strongly pro-Red and Franco was not taking any chances for everywhere troops were marching and countermarching.

In most places the bridges had been dynamited by the Red armies during their final retreat to the French border and frequently we had to leave the main road to make our way along muddy *routes vicinales*, so we lost much time.

On every hand was evidence of the passage of the defeated Red armies. To them it must have been a *via dolorosa*. Dead cars and lorries and buses strewed the way and every town and village had been reduced to rubble.

Shortly before we came to the frontier there lay the world's biggest scrapheap. There must have been fifteen to twenty thousand motor vehicles of every description, all smashed or rendered useless by the Reds before they crossed over into France, and I



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was told that nearly a hundred thousand refugees had gone by.

At a small post in the Pyrenees we had a last encounter with Spanish officialdom, but thanks to Saldanha and Colonel Pienaar we were not delayed above an hour. Then the Civil Guard gave us their salute by placing their hands over their hearts, and before long we were on French soil once more.

The first place we reached on the other side was Perpignan where again we saw a great pile of cars that had been abandoned by refugees flying before the nationalist troops. We ran short of petrol here and as rationing was strict, garage owners refused to sell us any without a permit. I went to see the local Prefect and when I told him who I was he surprised me by producing a telegram from Marshal Pétain, then French Ambassador at Madrid, requesting that I should receive every assistance and be given as much petrol as I wanted.

After we had left Madrid the old gentleman apparently sat down and worked out how far we would get under the existing petrol restrictions. He must have concluded that by the time we made Perpignan we would be running low and he probably anticipated that we would appeal to the Prefect, so had kindly wired him.

I was told in Madrid that Marshal Pétain was a defeatist in the sense that he thought France was rotten to the core on account of her political divisions and that she would be unable to put up a prolonged fight. He was not an admirer of Hitler and the Nazis, but he believed the Italian fascist system was suited to the temperament of his people.

We went by Arles and Nîmes and other old-world towns to Marseilles where we spent the night. I am a good linguist. I say it without boasting for I am aware that the faculty of picking up languages is a knack which some people have and others haven't. It certainly is not a sign of great intellect and a waiter in any continental restaurant will talk six or eight languages where a much abler man may speak only one or two.

However that may be, the morning after our arrival at Marseilles I walked down to a kiosk to get a supply of the latest newspapers as the Portuguese and Spanish journals I had brought with me were indefinite as to the Finnish war and the trend of recent events. I purchased several French and Italian papers as well as a London *Times* and a *Haagsche Post*, and armed with these I re-



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turned to the hotel. On a table in the lounge I spread out the papers to read up the news and to compare it with the contents of my Portuguese and Spanish issues.

Two English visitors who had been sitting there walked out after a while and as they went I heard one of them remark, 'By Jove, that fellow seems to know a lot of languages.' 'Yes,' said the other offhandedly, 'I suppose he's one of those Cook's guides who show the tourists around.'

## V

Dr. Saldanha and Colonel Pienaar and old Miguel now left us on their long return to Lisbon and Mr. Cooper and I started on a much longer journey. We crossed the Mediterranean in a French aeroplane on a non-stop flight to Algiers. We saw the Balearic Isles below and only one small ship all the way.

At Algiers I was met by consuls and officials, including Lord and Lady Dillon who, as far as I could make out, seemed to be doing liaison work between the French African troops and the British Army. The place was crowded with soldiers; foreign legionaries, Turcos, Spahis, and members of other picturesque regiments, in baggy trousers and burnous. They spoke bravely and were in high spirits, but the subsequent collapse of France must have left them in a sad plight.

Lord Dillon brought me details of the naval action in which the German pocket battleship *Graf von Spee* was knocked about and had to seek refuge in Montevideo harbour.

From Algiers we flew straight across the Sahara Desert by Air-France in three days. In spite of having been taken for 'a man from Cook's' I shall not turn the journey into a Baedeker but I made note of our itinerary: On the first day our course went via El-Golea, Anolef and Aguel-Hog to Gao on the river Niger (eight hours fifty minutes flying time). These places are oases, each situated hundreds of miles from the next, and the surrounding country is an abomination of desolation; nothing to see, nothing grows, and there is no living thing. How human beings ever found those waters is a mystery.

Next day we flew to Zinder and Fort Lami on a broad river flowing into Lake Chad which we could see in the distance. Both these places looked as if they had stepped out of Ouida or out of P. C. Wren's novels. (Four hours forty-eight minutes flying time.



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Dreary country underfoot all the way.) The river at Fort Lami is wider than the Zambezi, yet I had never heard of its existence until now.

From Fort Lami via Fort Archimbault and Bangui to Brazzaville on the Congo. (Flying time six hours fifty-two minutes.) The Governor of the Province accompanied us from Bangui. He was a full-blooded negro from Martinique, and French officers and civilians showed him the utmost deference and guards of honour stood to the salute as he passed. He was accompanied by a field-marshal or something, a local aborigine, a dear old fellow, his face all tattooed with tribal marks but in close-fitting French uniform, képi, sword and many decorations.

Brazzaville is the capital of French Equatorial Africa and across the river is Leopoldville, the capital of the Belgian Congo with Stanley Pool, a wide island-dotted stretch in between.

General Smuts had cabled a promise to send an aeroplane to fetch me at Leopoldville so we chartered a motor boat and we were ferried across.

In Leopoldville I met the Governor General, the British Consul, M. le Maire and other magnates. Our plane was not due for some days and in the meanwhile we were hospitably entertained. We were motored along the Stanley Rapids—an amazing sight, amazingly little known—two hundred miles of pitching, tossing river on which no ship or boat could survive for ten minutes. I was shown phases of native life and examples of what the Belgians are doing to uplift them.

Within short reach of Leopoldville there are cannibal tribes. I was told by a Belgian anthropologist who worked in a clinic I visited that no African eats human beings for food. He does so as a ritual, just as our own natives in the Union eat parts of a lion in order to gain strength and courage, and just as our witch doctors order the killing of people to enable them to distil medicine and charms from certain organs of the body. In the same way, so-called cannibals eat portions of a slain enemy to acquire strength and merit and as a sign of victory but, said he, the idea that anywhere in the world there was cannibalism in the accepted sense of the term is erroneous!

While I was at Leopoldville we received news that the *Graf von Spee* was scuttled and that her commander had shot himself in Buenos Aires.



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I remember that during the last war I had seen a picture in a German paper of a tablet erected to Graf von Spee and his two sons who perished in the battle of the Falklands:

*Im tiefsten atlantischen Ozean*
*liegen drei Deutsche Helden;*
*liegen drei Grafen von Spee.*

The end of this Graf von Spee was less heroic.

The Belgian administration placed a river steamer at my disposal in which I recrossed the Congo to Brazzaville to make a state call on the Governor General of French Equatoria. He was very deaf and one had to speak into a sort of battery standing on his desk. Everyone was very courteous and attentive.

I toyed with the plan of cancelling the aeroplane and going up the Congo instead but as this would have involved several weeks of delay I decided against it so we waited in patience. In the fullness of time we saw a speck in the sky, and a large Junker sent by General Smuts sat down on the aerodrome, piloted by Captain Madeley, a son of our Minister for Labour.

He flew me from Leopoldville to Loanda, the capital of Portuguese Angola. Here, again, I was met by the Governor General of the Province and for the second time in my life I was honoured with a salute of guns. I was sumptuously installed in the Governor's Residency and in the afternoon I was shown round Loanda with the old fort and interesting chapel.

There was an official dinner that night which started at nine p.m. and ended at midnight; a somewhat trying function after a long day. Next morning we took off early and flew down the coast to Mossamedes, thence to Lobito Bay. Ceremonial receptions were held at both places. At Lobito Bay were two German steamers that had run in for shelter when the war broke out. As far as I know they are still rotting there.

From Lobito Bay we continued, still hugging the beach until we reached the mouth of the Kunene River, and then we turned inland across the Kaokoveld which I explored seventeen years ago.

During that expedition I had struck the river far inland at a point where it was a mighty stream, flowing broad and strong among wooded islands teeming with big game and at night I heard the sound of a distant waterfall. I told myself at the time that some



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day I would navigate a longboat up the coast and I would do what no man had ever done before—sail across the bar and work my way up the Kunene, where elephant were standing on palm-fringed banks and hippo and crocodile splashing in undiscovered country.

Now my plan was being realized, but not as I had dreamed, for although I was crossing the bar of the river and was about to cruise up along its pathway I found that no one could take a longboat inside nor could he sail beside elephant on its palm-fringed banks and hippo and crocodile splashing in its waters, for the simple reason that the Kunene during its final sixty miles to the ocean loses itself in the 'Namib', the desert belt that stretches northward from the Orange River for a thousand miles; and thus it reaches the sea a mere trickle scarce six inches wide on which a child's toy ship could hardly keep afloat.

We went up the river for fifty or sixty miles. It was mostly dry except for an occasional waterhole, though there was probably an underground flow beneath the sand. Afterwards we branched away south-east over the Kaokoveld and I was able to pick up landmarks I still remembered. The Kaokoveld has largely retained its isolation. But our air service from Windhoek to Lobito Bay and Loanda necessitated an intermediate aerodrome which has been laid out within a mile or two of Cabrito's village where I obtained horses for my journey long ago. Once a week a machine flies over the country and the Mahimba serfs and their Herero overlords in the neighbourhood have grown so accustomed to these strange creatures that they barely look up when one passes overhead.

We landed at the drome to take in petrol—it was in charge of a ranger who, with his wife and small child, are the only Europeans in the whole of the Kaokoveld. He told me that there are many white rhinos and if this be true, it is a fact unknown to our scientists in the Union.

On taking off I asked the pilot to make a turn to bring us over the Etosha Pan for I was anxious to see it. The Etosha Pan is a shallow depression about eighty miles by eighty (I should say). In the winter it is dry, but in the rainy season it stands three or four inches under water. Whether there is some chemical substance in the soil or some type of vegetation that attracts the fauna I do not know, but thousands of wildebeest, gemsbok (oryx) and other antelopes are always teeming in and around the Pan.



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It is said that game animals, being nimble and lightfooted, move on its surface wet or dry without getting bogged, but that no human being has ever successfully crossed it and one hears legends of hunters who tried to do so and were never heard of again. One tale runs of a party of Boer hunters who set out with a string of ox wagons to hunt far out on the Pan and they too disappeared from ken.

I had not seen the Pan before so I looked down on it with interest. We flew low; the entire area was under water and there were herds of game splashing their way through, or grazing in all directions round its margin. At one spot I noticed two gemsbok rams fighting. A gemsbok is said to possess the most formidable horns of any antelope. These are three to four feet long, sharp-pointed, and straight as a sword. There is a popular theory that even lion give the oryx a wide berth for fear of being impaled. Nevertheless, these two animals charged and butted, and, it seemed to me, tried to savage each other with their teeth, making no attempt to use their horns.

Perhaps it is out of place here to interpolate a theory of my own, but I believe that the horns of antelope, and of all the bovidae, are not weapons of defence or offence at all, but are evolved on some sexual basis. With the exception of the gemsbok, the sable and one or two other species that have straight stabbing horns (perhaps a biological fluke) the great majority of antelope have lyre-shaped horns or horns with their points corkscrewed or twisted in upon themselves. If Nature intended horns to be fighting implements I can hardly conceive of anything less suited to the purpose than those of buffalo, wildebeest, koodoo, waterbuck, impala, blesbok, springbok, sassaby, hartebeest and the rest, to say nothing of the absurd hat-racks adorning the heads of European and American deer.

A buffalo will kill a foe by pounding him with the curved bosses of his horns and not with their points, and the lesser *capridae* depend on speed to elude their enemies. Their horns may be of use in clearing twigs and branches from their eyes as they flee through thorn and scrub, but in a fight they would be a let and a hindrance. Another consideration is that if Nature intended antelopes to defend themselves with their horns, it is at least curious that in so many cases the males are magnificently provided with spiralled and curved appendages while the females, upon whom devolves



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the duty of defending their young, are in this respect left defenceless.

However, this is a digression. Having circled over the Etosha Pan and having looked down at the old German fort at Namutoni, we touched in at Outjo, an outpost village, to fuel, and that evening we landed at Windhoek, the capital of the South-West Territory which we took in 1915. My unheralded arrival caused some local excitement and I was detained far into the night talking to eager listeners.

I think Mr. Cooper and I are the only South Africans who have flown the Sahara Desert along the route we had taken. Moreover, I do not know of anyone who has travelled from England to South Africa as we had, for there was no air communication with the Belgian Congo and we had only been enabled to do it by the aid of the machine General Smuts had sent to bridge the gap between Leopoldville and Angola.

From Windhoek we started on the home run, flying down the south-west barrens to Upington and from there to Johannesburg, and so ended this entrancing journey.

## VI

For several months after my return from England the war seemed to hang fire and then, in April 1940, the storm broke.

I remember that I had gone up to the Transvaal to open a new irrigation scheme among the Barberton mountains, and as I was about to perform the ceremony before a large audience, I heard a shout. I looked up and saw a runaway motor-car tearing down the slope straight into the crowd; it killed and wounded a number of people and I was hurled clean over a fence.

That night at the hospital I heard a woman's voice from out of the dark say that news had come on the wireless of German warships steaming up the coast to invade Norway and during the next few days came news of the fighting at Stavanger, Trondjhem, and elsewhere. Soon followed the rape of Belgium and Holland, the fall of France, the declaration of war by the Italians and the grave plight of the British army in Flanders.

We were kept advised of the position from London each day. The British Government cabled us at first that they hoped to evacuate 20,000 men to England. Next day they spoke of 40,000, and the day after that they even spoke of saving 80,000. Then came



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the epic of Dunkirk and the bringing away of almost the whole of the expeditionary force.

Out here in South Africa, we too were faced by what seemed to be a dangerous situation. Italy had 200,000 soldiers in Abyssinia and we expected an immediate move to invade Kenya, and in due course our own country, for at the time there was little to stop them. Kenya had a few battalions of Askari and as for a South African army it had existed largely on paper when the war began, though General Smuts was feverishly at work building up a new one, and volunteers were flocking to the colours.

In the meantime the Afrikaner racial extremists openly exulted at the British reverses. In Parliament and over the countryside they shouted that England was but a twitching corpse, that Hitler would dictate his peace terms in London within six weeks; the British Empire was crumbling and they were going to establish an Afrikaner dictatorship in which General Smuts and his followers were to be called to account on Gestapo lines.

And a strange movement had sprung up to implement these threats. It was known as the 'Ossewa Brandwag' (the ox-wagon picket). Its members, which were said to number a quarter of a million, drilled secretly at night, and they indulged in bomb throwing, sabotage and other subversive acts quite foreign to the normal character of our Afrikaans people. Their avowed intention was to prepare an organization modelled on the Nazi system which would take control the moment word came that Great Britain was crushed.

General Smuts and I and most of our colleagues took the view that in the long run our Afrikaans-speaking citizens were too level-headed to be permanently led astray by alien propaganda of this kind. From long experience we felt that in a country like the Union it would be a mistake to create cheap martyrs so we gave the 'Ossewa Brandwag' and our other opponents plenty of rope. Their overdone racial fervour smacked to us of the Ju-ju and Voodooism of Lagos and the Gold Coast.

Not everyone on our side agreed with us, and there was a time when I could not show my face anywhere without some well-meaning but irate and jittery individual rushing at me to demand the shooting out-of-hand of every 'Ossewa Brandwag' firebrand and the instant gaoling of all opposition Members of Parliament and political leaders!



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General Smuts told me he suffered from similar importunities and that his invariable reply was, 'Leave it to us, leave it to us; we know what we are doing, please don't rock the boat.'

Time has amply justified us. Now (in 1943) the 'Ossewa Brandwag' has practically fizzled out and the various republican groups that sprang up in the hope of an immediate German victory are at present so busy wrangling among themselves that we scarcely give them a thought.

All along, I have striven to avoid as far as possible overmuch reference to our inter-tribal stupidities, but I was forced to touch on them here and there for the sake of giving an idea of the South African political background. I have only this final word on the subject. Our white population is under three millions. Of these, roughly 55 per cent are of Dutch descent, and 40 to 45 per cent are of British extraction. Of the Dutch section about half are standing aloof from our war effort. They hold that the war is in the interest of Great Britain alone, that it is none of our business and that we had no right to drag them into the maelstrom.

And yet, in an army of volunteers, something like 35 per cent of our soldiers and 35 per cent of our casualties in Abyssinia and Libya have been Afrikaners.

And there is another list, which it may be lacking in good taste and subtlety to call a casualty list. It is the notices of engagements and marriages between Dutch and English couples that appear in the newspapers every day. These show that they are intermingling and inter-marrying all the time in rising tempo and by 1960 or thereabouts even the racial politicians will not be able to tell them apart. So much for local politics as I see them.

All this time, General Smuts was hard at work, and in spite of our small population and our racial differences he produced the strongest army in our history, with more than 200,000 men in the field. They went first to Kenya for the expected Italian onslaught and when that did not materialize they went to Abyssinia.

In a short and brilliant campaign some 40,000 British and South African troops sent a vastly greater Italian army into headlong flight. As for our men: I was told that an Italian army document was picked up which read, 'The Italian troops are retreating in good order. The South African troops are advancing in the wildest confusion.' This was probably just what did take place.

In our campaign in German West in 1915 General Botha's



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shaggy horsemen came galloping through the bush with no semblance of discipline but relentlessly hustling their opponents, Hauptmann Francke, the German commander-in-chief, was so outraged by their breach of military decorum that he flung up his arms to heaven and exclaimed, 'This is not a war; it is a hippodrome!' But inside of a week he and all his men were prisoners.

It was like the story of the British soldier in the Crimean War. He lay in hospital with a sabre cut across his skull. A kindhearted old lady asked him how he had come by his hurts and he said, 'It was like this, Mum. The Roosians don't know about fighting. I rides at one of them there Cossacks with me sword and I gives him the thrust. Instead of giving me the parry, the bloody fool 'its me over the 'ead.'

Our soldiers in Abyssinia paraphrased Mr. Churchill's famous speech by saying: 'Never before have so few done so much to so many,' and that, in short, is a good account of what happened. When the campaign was over, the South African troops went to Libya where they fought with unvarying fortitude.

John and Michael have been in the thick of it. They joined as private soldiers. How John got into the army with one hand and one eye I do not know.

I passed the Johannesburg drill hall one morning and in a long queue of volunteers I noticed him half-way up the line. I pretended not to see him and at lunch-time he told me that he had been accepted and that he was to report to a training camp next day. I have been told that when he was asked how he got into the army as a private he said it was 'through family influence'.

We have a coloured woman named Louisa who does the family washing. In camp John had to do his own laundry and he found it hard work. When he came home on his first leave he said to his mother, 'Mummy, I have come to the conclusion that we are scandalously underpaying old Louisa.' He went on to serve in Libya and escaped out of Tobruk just before its fall by a lucky chance. Michael is a fighter-pilot in the South African Air Force, and he too is in Libya.

As for myself, my age debars me from active service, but I have not been idle. As a sort of junior War Lord, with a seat on Councils and Committees dealing with munitions, supplies and other matters, I move about a great deal. Twice General Smuts sent me



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on confidential errands to the Portuguese Governor General of Mozambique, and he and I flew over his territory looking down on herds of elephant and big game, the while we discussed matters of common interest.

And General Smuts and I and Sir Pierre van Ryneveld (who flew me to Zululand long ago) made a long reconnaissance flight to Ovampoland and to the mouth of the Kunene River in connection with our defences. Winging down the Kunene we saw the curiously striated Zebra Mountains and an immense canyon which disappears underground at one point to reappear nearer the river. It comes in on the left bank and I think an expedition to look into this would repay investigation. The canyon can easily be recognized by the curious serrated filigree of its edges. I doubt whether anyone except the occupants of our plane has ever seen this strange phenomenon.

I revisited the Okovango Swamps by air once more, on military observance, and I saw what has not been seen in human memory. This was the Botletle River in flood right down to the Makarikari, with the natives building fish traps far below Rakops. As for the Makarikari, it was a vast sheet of water, eighty to a hundred miles wide, where previously I had seen it only as a sunbaked pan of salt. Professor Schwarz's dream had come true at last and the great depression was full, but it has had no effect whatsoever on our rainfall.

The King of Greece who had escaped from the débâcle of Crete arrived in this country with some of his entourage and I took them into the Low Country. The two Greek Princesses Royal camped on Sandringham and they greatly enjoyed the experience of spending a few nights in the open among the lion.

After that I accompanied M. de Bettencourt, the Portuguese Governor-General, also into the Low Country—it is a good place for quiet talks away from prying eyes. And I made another military journey to Ovampoland and the Kunene River, going overland this time. On the upward journey we followed the old route through the Kalahari Desert along the dry beds of the Kuruman and the Oop rivers seeing thousands of gemsbok (oryx). Thence we travelled up through Windhoek and via the Etosha Pan to Ondangua, the administrative centre of Ovampoland (three houses and a store).

On the return journey we followed the left bank of the Kunene



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River as far as Zwartbooi Drift, the port of entry into Angola (one hut), passing the Rua Cana falls on our way. From Zwartbooi Drift we travelled south through the Kaokoveld where I had sojourned of old. Many hundreds of its Mahimba, naked savages in my time, have joined the army and are now in uniform, five thousand miles to the north.

When at length we returned to Windhoek I had much to do. I visited Swakopmund and Walvis Bay to see the coastal defences, and I met the Herero chiefs. Their home is in the mountains north of Windhoek and the Hereros remember the cruelty of the German regime when so many of them, men, women and children, were chased into the desert to perish. When they were told what was wanted of them their leader stood up and said, 'Is it the Germans you wish us to fight? Show us the road, show us the road.'

I recently inspected over three thousand of them in the Transvaal, all magnificently trained and proud of their bearing, and all straining at the leash.

I have been to Rhodesia on army matters, and was flown from centre to centre, from camp to camp, by Lord Douglas Hamilton.

Several times I camped on Sandringham and on such occasions as I was able to reach the Cape Peninsula I fished on the Bay. But, alas, without John and Michael, for the happy days when we were able to live among the game and sail on *Lucky Jim* lie far behind.

On one of these visits, I had an unpleasant encounter with a lion on Sandringham. Going after partridges one evening with my shotgun, I saw a small kingfisher caught in a native trap. It was fluttering in the air, one leg held by a piece of string attached to a reed. I stood my gun against the river bank and walked forward to release the bird. As it flew away I caught sight of an enormous lion crouching about five or six yards away, looking very much as if he meant to spring. I backed out slowly and by the time I reached the shotgun, the lion had backed out too.

During the many times General Smuts has gone to Egypt and Libya to visit his troops he has left me in charge of South Africa. Once, while he was absent, British naval craft brought in several Vichy ships intercepted on the Madagascar route, and I interned the ships and their crews and the six hundred troops they contained. The local French plenipotentiary made furious protest and he told me that if I held these ships his government would see to it that all French vessels would in future be escorted by warships.



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But I smiled and put the whole lot on Robben Island in Table Bay, for no one cared a rap about Marshal Pétain and his government.

Many of the troops were Hovas from the Imerina. When I visited them I was able to speak to them in their own language, of which I still had a smattering from the days I lived among them nearly forty years back; and they grinned delightedly.

Having quarrelled over the seizure of the ships I placated the French Minister to some extent by lifting 70,000 bottles of wine out of one of their vessels for the use of the internees. So I had an ovation when next I visited them. General Smuts, on his return, endorsed everything I had done in this matter of internment.

In the course of my journeyings it has been a matter of quiet satisfaction to me to find that the irrigation schemes I had built are producing immense quantities of wheat and other foodstuffs, which go far towards the provisioning of the great British convoys that are sailing our coasts on their way to Egypt and India.

And now, with Russia grinding up the flower of Hitler's brave young Nazi soldiers, with America and Australia holding Japan in the Far East and with American and British troops landing in North Africa I come to a close. I realize that in comparison with the mighty events shaking the world, my narrative has small significance.

But I wrote this book because I like setting down things seen and experienced and also because I wished to prove that in spite of our racial and political squabbles, South Africa is a country of good will and good temper, and has the hope and prospect of unity into a single nation in years to come.



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